BLACK STREAM

NATHALIE SEDGWICK COLBY

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BY

NATHALIE SEDGWICK COLBY
AUTHOR OF "GREEN FOREST"

NEW YORK
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. BY
QUINN & BODEN COMPANY, INC.
RAHWAY, N. J.

To

THOSE DELIGHTFUL PEOPLE

R. C. R.
A. C. S.
W. E. S.

BLACK STREAM

CHAPTER I

He wasn't going to open his eyes just yet and let in Emmy's pink hair that tufted the ruffled pillow of her twin bed. Had switched out its flame the last thing at night. Without looking, he knew well how her pink puff absorbed the henna—went into the roses painted on the footboards.

"I love pink," she said frequently.

The color leaked through the lace lamp shade by his bed, the sofa massed it in the corner.

"Don't put your feet on the velvet," she'd warned. "It's been done over for Agatha's début. . . . And your scarfpin, John. . . ." His scarfpin had left a hole in the pin cushion. Brutal of him to jab such a delicate thing!

A man felt coarse in a woman's room, a hedgehog in a handkerchief box; got ruffled over, smothered in pink schemes of Emmy. So it was hard to breathe. If he died, would she cover him with a pink marble tombstone?—Dr. John Farraday garlanded—doves somewhere and an urn?

Drowsy, head on the pillow, no need to move for a while. Eyes closed, he could dial New York; had the feel of it. Just the way the air edged his cheek told the time—seven-thirty precisely.

Outside were back yards—stone pens empty, waiting. . . . Soon the kitchen symphony would flow into them. Clatter of pans, maids' voices calling off key—always off key. (Why did servants in the morning make Gregorian dissonances?) For a moment against the silence the city bulged. Consciously he held it back. If he moved, woke Emmy, the day would rip through and claim him.

Already the next twelve hours held him mortgaged in a book marked: "Dr. John Farraday, Appointments." It lay on his mahogany desk beside the office telephone through which Miss Mapes took his messages.

"You want Dr. Farraday? Just a moment." Her voice a silver trough through which women slid to him. "Would tomorrow do?" At that point they were still sliding. It always gave him a little jar when she took up her pen, caught them on the end of it with, "Tomorrow, then," as she tethered them on the page in bold, large letters.

"You are squandered on the end of a pen." She had slipped out the words yesterday . . . said things that came back to one . . . saw the names as he did perhaps—patients massing forever in front of the thing it was important to do.

They clutched at him—held him fast. "Doctor, I have a pain here—" "I can't sleep—" "I don't eat—" Each one had to be coddled, rocked and fed.

There were the ones too who said, "Is it?—is it?—" Left one haunted by life's terror—the whole zone of it—done to scale in a pair of eyes. One had to tell them: "Any time, any minute, please call me."

Before Miss Mapes walked into his office, "I'll never get through the jam," he used to say to himself in despair. Miss Mapes hadn't been there a week before she squeezed through the crowd. Called out gayly when they crowded the most: "Another hour for you, Dr. Farraday!"

Kept his book herself. "Please don't—it's an impenetrable forest. Here's the list—" if he wanted to open it.

If he disobeyed her—turned the pages to May —"Mrs. Brazee, nervous exhaustion" might stare

a rendezvous out at him. She would be just about due then to be put in shape for the London season. Perfectly supine, lying in his bed this morning, thinking of her long lines and her red hair, he disliked Madeleine Brazee.

"Enid Brazee has a crush on Agatha," so Mary Ellen had put the Brazees above the horizon. "You just ought to see Enid, a perfect baby, Father. She lives in the house opposite . . . brings us home in her car every day . . . governess always sticking around . . . Agatha just loves her."

Only for Enid's "crush" on Agatha (at "the very best school, John, where our children meet the nicest girls in town") Mrs. Brazee would be just where she belonged: a patient in his office stuck with a pin by Miss Mapes. Could be labeled: "A woman with nervous exhaustion playing with baubles that her husband throws her to keep her amused."

"Mrs. Brassy," Mary Ellen's pink tongue between that very expensive dentist's gold brace pointed at the woman's chinchilla back. A man couldn't go as far as that—but he stood solid with his youngest

daughter, who at fifteen saw that Mrs. Brazee's name infested the house.

"Madeleine thinks every woman ought to dye her hair." Emmy had begun it last spring; said it over and over—kept it up—then yesterday had come home. "I've done it, John!" Lifting her hat, there she was, bobbed and colored, his Emmy at fifty, burlesqued. No collusion any more in her color scheme.

"Damn it, a man likes to see his wife with gray hair, loves gray hair, looks for it as he looks for extinct fauna and flora in every ballroom. No wisdom without it!"

He'd said something like that; thought for a moment she was going to cry; and he couldn't stand Emmy's tears; but she turned stolid.

"When a father spends *all* his time in a laboratory, a wife has to keep up-to-date for the children, hasn't she?" Her lips threaded over things she wouldn't say; it was horrid between them.

Damn the flamboyancy of red hair! It brought the city into his house—caught the New York he hated in red furrows as the East was in a China-

man's pigtail. Was a symbol of the "pretend youth" of Mrs. Brazee's set that had become Emmy's goal. When he went into it, wasn't the immaturity of Mrs. Brazee's New York the thing he hated the most? The Luna Park whirl of it, where Emmy sat stagnating, holding her Agatha, saying: "One has to keep moving, John."—Emmy, who didn't know the A B C of relativity, didn't know she could imagine herself a whizzer in a derailed train, watching another train go by.

Explain to them—the things that were written in books. "Oh, books!" she would yawn.

"Really, Father, don't hold a clinic!" for Agatha had the unbroken knowledge of youth.

It was up to a man then, to see in silence, his family mentally starving on a diet about as nourishing as chewing gum—infinite motion and no sustenance in it.

To respect Penny's "Enid is great, Father!"—Enid, a sugar-coated moron, slinking about, stomach out, breasts receding, who gave a thrust to a man's nerve center. "Enid great!" The boy must be biologically wrong.

What to do about it?

Women talked things over with other women; had little clearing-house talks about husbands together. But each man, except for the ear of a wife, was supposed to die with his fester, whatever it was, intact inside of him. What about other men? Where did Jim Brazee behind his sealed face stand on a wife, on Enid? Did Madeleine give him that smash that sealed his face once and forever?

Eyes still closed, he knew the sun was shining full on the roof of the laboratory in the corner of the yard. "Father's play-house," Agatha called the place where Miss Mapes had worked with him—last night till twelve o'clock. God bless that girl! She caught a man's thought—made it possible for him. A St. John the Baptist of the clouds, clearing a path for his vision—what Miss Mapes was.

"A little army, they will march around the world, never fear." Her last words as her small hand that had a tussle in it, put the test tubes, empty and waiting, on the glass shelf last night.

He'd left her there in the laboratory in a white dress, shining like the tiles on its walls. (Her white-

ness rested him, nothing adhered to it.) Left her carelessly—to go home at midnight. Thought of her now for the first time, her forest lengths moving swiftly through the empty streets alone.

He'd hurried upstairs. Wanted to tell Emmy what had happened in the laboratory—"My experiment, Emmy—" was on his lips as he found her cold-creaming her face in front of the mirror . . .

"It's a pity you weren't at the party, John—Mrs. Brazee is important to know socially."

He didn't want to hear about Mrs. Brazee then —couldn't bear it, was nervous as hell coming upstairs after five hours of work. Wanted to get near to Emmy. She mustn't look at him with outside eyes, a woman remote as a clown with white face and red lips sitting there forever wiping cold cream off.

Twenty-five years ago—except for her hair she hadn't changed—he remembered her saying:

"I think a man who does research is simply wonderful."

He was a great boy like Penny, bringing her ice cream at that party. After the ice cream she was

sure, "Any girl would work all her life anywhere to help bring out the truth." So really the Idea was the reason for Penny and Agatha and Mary Ellen. "Wasn't it, Emmy?" he wanted to ask. Would have pointed it out, only that she pushed his words back into the pit of his stomach with:

"Mrs. Brazee is going to entertain the Swedish Crown Prince and Princess in the spring."

When he said he didn't know there were any, Emmy's voice shook, telling him that there had been a royal dinner arranged in April by "Count Eric Somebody," a famous diplomat. "Every one but you knows him, John." Madeleine had asked them both.

"But you'll be in your laboratory in carpet slippers, never fear" which was unjust. He had stretched out his feet. Silly, too, they had looked in black pumps as she speeded on about an interpretative dancer, "who was simply divine, John—he pulled fecundity out of the ground. One could almost see the corn grow." The man told fortunes, too, wearing a pink chiffon tunic, said that Agatha would marry a prince.

"And you know, John, Agatha might so easily . . ." Emmy was sure of it.

Telling fairy tales about Agatha and a prince, Emmy smiled, looked suddenly young like Agatha.

He had tried to speak then—would have; went as far as "Emmy"—only she got the lead with an Indian fakir that Madeleine Brazee had hired for thousands of dollars. He had stuck hatpins all over himself. "It was his religion, John, that made him do it. Both his breasts were pinned through, and his Adam's apple besides. I felt the pins."

When he said that, religion or not, the whole thing was obscene . . .

"Obscene!" Emmy, almost crying, burst out that he never knew anything any one was doing. "Hiding downstairs!"

"Where have you been anyway, all evening, John —just where?"

But that's what he had wanted to tell her, had been sitting there waiting to tell her—even then she didn't listen. "Madeleine was dressed all in gold, John," with the lowest back he could ever imagine on a dress. She could have cried because

she'd got Agatha a white dress for her début. "You ought to have seen how crazy all the men were about Enid's red velvet last night, John." Madeleine said red always challenged a man. Did he think so? Beside the red dress, Enid had worn diamonds—her father had given them to her.

He must listen about Enid's diamonds. "For they were the most beautiful stones, John. As big as that!" Emmy's thumb measured off the tip of her little finger. There was no end apparently to the things Jim Brazee gave his daughter.

Snatches of Emmy's talk were in his mind now. He had gone to sleep with them. They stayed clear, inerasible, like poetry learned the last thing at night. (Infallible method! One read a verse, and some subliminal Gold Dust Twins did the work.)

He remembered searching back through Brazee annals, to her question: "Where have you been anyway, all evening?" "In the laboratory, Emmy." Only an hour ago down there he had seen his experiment about to work out . . . so simple and clear that any one might have seen it . . . was just on the edge of it. "Think of it, Emmy." After

twenty-five years testing—toiling, not to be able to go through with the thing tonight because that damned Dr. Squires hadn't left enough blood? Did she see he couldn't bear to wait for the finish, sleepless in bed, his brain a continuous race horse all night?—"I can't bear it," he told her, "unless you say something friendly to me." He was simply wriggling with nerves, so afraid that the thing wouldn't come out right after all. He'd failed over and over. "I know I've failed, Emmy." He admitted it to her, couldn't admit it enough, but this time she could feel sure it was different.

"Different? How different?" she had asked sharply. Hadn't he announced the same thing before? Hadn't she stood failure after failure?

It didn't make any difference what she had stood —"No difference at all!" he'd said violently. She must understand what had happened tonight by itself, must say some lullaby stuff to him, or whatever a woman did say when she believed in a man, believed in him so that even if he failed it wouldn't matter to her. If the test didn't come out, it was

there, nevertheless, securely there for him or for some one else.

"Just say it's the going on, the seeking, that matters," he had implored her.

Was nervous as hell talking there last night. Now, watching her buttered finger nails spread out on the sheet, "I must have been crazy last night," he thought, "to feel for that hand" that had darted away from him. If he did succeed with the thing, whatever he called it, would he close the laboratory up—let her use the place for a laundry, so people would stop watching with spy-glasses from their back windows. Would he do that little favor for her? she'd wanted to know.

"Will you stop working downstairs at night, John?"

But she must know, even in a housekeeper's way, how it takes time to establish an idea. It would take four or five years for his to get into order, so it would march—"like a little army."

"Four or five years is a long time to wait in New York. You are crazy, John! Crazy! puttering there

in the laboratory with Miss Mapes." Her eyes had gone all over him. Not a wife's eyes at all. They estimated him. He held no value for them.

"You're tired, John. You've no right to look so tired with Penny and Agatha and Mary Ellen to take care of." The lines in her face came out—a filigree mask. He could have lifted it intact off her skin.

He had switched out the lights, knew she was saying her prayers on the floor as the bishop, her father, had taught her to do. Then her bed creaked. "Good night," he whispered . . . waited . . . no answer.

Lying there silently, he had gone over and over his experiment, turned the figures, whirling against the dark, around and around. Couldn't see a leak anywhere.

The last thing he thought of before he fell asleep was Miss Mapes' hand on the test tubes. "A little army," she had said. They began to march. Faster and faster. They must have been going very strong, for they marched into China past rows of pigtails —he at the head legging it for all he was worth,

Miss Mapes beside him, a great swing to her—when Emmy's voice had come out of the dark:

—"Mr. Brazee has given Enid a roadster." Marching so fast, her voice shot him awake all in pieces.

Was it that sudden halt made him so bone-tired this morning? Could even go himself one better—marrow-tired—never felt this way before. If he moved his finger, aching currents started all over him, waved to his extremities—couldn't even fish up the formula for his experiment—was glad he had written it down and left it in the safe. Would test "the thing" as Emmy called it, this afternoon. Just now wondered why he had cared so much last night. Wished to God he had a cup of coffee—the kind Miss Mapes made, so unbilgy.

"Bring up coffee and toast, Martha, and lots of jam. Have the coffee hot. It was horrid yesterday." Agatha was calling to Martha over the banisters.

"I must send the child some white roses for her coming-out party tonight." For he remembered her eighteen years ago, four years after Penny, at her very first season. "They must have the best of every-

thing," he had promised across heads like the fuzz of a duckling, Penny in his crib, Agatha close beside Emmy in the big double bed.

Emmy had often reminded him of his words—"Best of everything." She recited them to him like her father, the bishop.

Well—had they? he wondered. . . . Couldn't discuss values with Emmy.

"See what Madeleine Brazee has given Enid," Emmy's comeback. No more to be said after that. He wouldn't blame Emmy no matter what happened, for she wasn't responsible. She still held Penny and Agatha up to her breasts—hadn't known how to wean them. Mary Ellen would be nuzzling there, only there wasn't any room left; Penny and Agatha guzzled so much.

If he lay with eyes closed, perhaps Emmy would think him asleep, would leave him alone without speaking. But she wouldn't—even now he felt her nails scraping his face.

"You're bristly." Competently she touched him like a foreman testing machinery.

CHAPTER II

"Toast—jam—coffee," Agatha had called over the banister at eight o'clock, putting Mary Ellen in her place immediately afterward with: "Mother said that even if Father did excuse you from school you were to get up early for breakfast."

At that moment not far from her employer's house, the metal lumbering of the cars came through woolly sleep, and Miss Mapes' ear held consciously the roar of the city. "Get-ap!" blared through her window; a horse's hoof beat a singsong on the pavement; he dragged something heavy, all the prance taken out of him; *clop-clop*—the sound went on and on until it was a little bit in the distance.

Last night she had plopped into bed—"a stone in a pit," her last thought as the day leaped out of her. Waking up now, she saw the line of her feet against the footboard, her hand on the sheet. Last night it clasped a test tube. A moment afterward Dr. Farraday had said, "You and I"—dropped it, a lost and found phrase, in the laboratory. He had always said "I" before. "You and I" brought life back

now. It filled her; she got light with it, burst with it. The bed was a springboard that bounced her out into the day into a cold bath, where she flopped about before wrenching herself out of the water onto a bathmat where she shivered under a towel, a body tingling with comeback. Dry, she was left pink nakedness with a nostalgia for coffee, which she took in an aboriginal way, plucked straight from the burner on the shelf over the bathtub, no middleman between consumed and consumer.

Cosy to sit all by oneself on the edge of a couch, blue wrappered, drinking from an earthenware cup, dipping rolls. To be Miss Mapes, all alone in a New York's cell formation, labeled outside: "Apartments for rent, one room and bath."

The only way for a girl to live. For weren't all the old places mopped up and done for, no houses left anywhere for ghosts to revisit? She missed them, the ghosts, as she walked home at night so secure through the streets of the city past brick buildings, blatant, unhaunted.

Shoplofts, fourteen stories high, all that was left of Father's old studio after the war. Now he lived

scattered in other people's minds; in one's own mind only hops and leaps of him left, everyday fluidity already all gone. Across ten years she remembered him working and working, remembered saying to herself, "I can't cook another dinner with onions for him." She'd often got cross budgeting his statues into clothes, food, and rent. And was sorry now—so terribly sorry now. Then there was the day she saw grace spiral through a faun's body. "That's beauty!" And she knew there weren't enough onions in the world to cook in return for her helping of beauty. Then when she was twenty, his face lay dead on the sofa, white as a piece of paper not painted over. Backward, across five years with Dr. Farraday, across the war, she had cried fearfully.

She didn't cry any more. No cry-babies allowed in the little laboratory that stood in the corner of Dr. Farraday's yard. "Miss Mapes' kennel"—Mrs. Farraday had dropped the phrase into her ear around a door. Great nerve of the little place to stand there at all, for judging by ponderosity, the big house was all to the good, thirty feet wide and furnished in

periods. And it was to be plainly seen that the two buildings didn't like each other.

Dr. Farraday went back and forth.

He ought to have been in the big house asleep last night, instead of asking, with a creviced face, for, "One cup of coffee, please, Miss Mapes—" and then: "Another," filled to the brim. "You must tell Bridget how to make good coffee." He drained it down. "Tell Bridget"— But then great men were often appallingly simple.

She'd been a good girl, said: "You should have a real dinner, chops or something"—that a woman could live on snatches, but one was brought up to see beefsteak and chops in a man.

"All folklore, mighty-hunter idea," he had answered, eating pilot biscuits crisped with butter that she had bought for her breakfast. "More crackers, more coffee, please, Miss Mapes." He knew food was there for him; had been ever since he had said there wasn't a casual banana to be had in his house.

"Not a soul at home except Nora and Bridget." And Agatha didn't allow him to address Nora. "You'll spoil her, Father." He'd given his word. Was

afraid he might forget. Did Miss Mapes realize how portentous Nora became in the silence of the big dining-room watching him eat? "You'll never believe it, but I get bashful," and he finished two eggs that she boiled in the coffee-pot.

They could be so gay skipping about in each other's ether, playmates of quality—no twenty years between them (the moment taking unexpected shape—vital like casual things—clouds gathering . . . tea leaves . . .); and then, before the coffee grounds and shells were out of the way, he'd cross into that other world where he worked as a god, pointing the progress of truth in a linen coat, bending over a microscope.

Day after day, for twenty-five years, he had curved like that. She thought of him now—massive, unbudgeable—as she washed her cups and saucers under the faucet. Had his wife given him a glass of hot milk last night? Had he slept soundly?

She had to mop up her floor—loathed floors—tired to death of a mop. (Nature had it all over a New York apartment in cleaning and mending.) Wanted to ask herself gloating questions. What did

he do before she was there to help him? Could any one else bring him acids and instruments, boil his things for him, hand him everything he wanted without his speaking a word, until they both disappeared, fused together—one mind that worked its sinew in the little room, pushing against snags everywhere. Could he? She turned her mattress. (What can one do against the sea? That was housework.)

Then there had come that moment when he covered a page with numbers, over and over, the skin stretching on his face with the effort. The room hot . . . her dress limp with steam . . . as she leaned against the wall, blinking, "I may go to sleep." When his voice rang out like a bugle, "We are near it—you and I! Not a leak anywhere." His face like a mountain filled to smoothness with spring. "You and I," he had said, lifting her up suddenly into his pattern.

"That damned Squires hasn't left enough blood to finish." He was trembling as he got up to go; couldn't bear to leave it unsolved.

"I have failed so many times before."

He was all in pieces—she knew it—afraid for a

moment he was seeing a mirage of his vision. And how could a man see clearly? she asked herself now —a man traveling after a day's work on pure momentum, his impetus spent hours ago? He needed some one to comfort him—needed some one badly. Nothing for her to do but to put the thirty-six test tubes away on the glass shelf: say:

"A little army, these tubes," and something about their getting to China. But he hadn't heard her at all —just changed his coat, while she stood there a zany —tongued-tied—wanting to say that for her his vision waited secure, "like Christ for the Prophets," like the figures her father saw in blocks of marble —one could call it the Sleeping Beauty to children!

Would it always be that way? Supplies stored up for him. Inchoate in her mind, they were the Bible or Shakespeare, great unbeatable thoughts—and they came out like a pink tea party!

"You're tired"—all she had said, watching him leave for Mrs. Farraday, while she stayed to scrub the laboratory floor clean, on her hands and knees. For she wouldn't let an Irish mind over the thresh-

old. The place lay there immaculate for his test this morning.

Eight-thirty o'clock now. Last night was no business of hers, for last night was yesterday. Nine o'clock at the office—that was today. "Have you managed a moment for me, Miss Mapes?" His eyes would look as they always did before an experiment, compasses holding direction.

In the mirror, she combed her hair, crisp as lettuce leaves; her father had always said so, and it was just as well, for there was no time—never would be —for tongs. Reflected in the glass, neck and arms coming out of pink—she wished most terribly that she could go to Agatha's party. There was a dress in the steamer trunk under the bed. Pressed out, it would just do. And forty dollars in the bank could buy grand shoes and stockings . . .

For she wanted the Doctor to see her just once—out of a uniform! Could she help knowing she was beautiful? There was her father: "Beautiful masonry," feeling the bones of her face—and the wrong man in white flannels babbling, "You are beautiful," over and over in the summer, under trees

and on a beach that was blanched by the moon to a bone thrown up by the sea—adding besides, "May I kiss you?" as she sat there wanting to quintessentialize the whole night, to take it in an extract back to the city to give to the Doctor.

If Mrs. Farraday would ask her to the party, she could look like a princess. But Mrs. Farraday wouldn't ask her. The way that woman said, "The moving vans are coming at twelve this morning for Miss Agatha's party. Have everything cleared away at five minutes to," put one back in a pumpkin forever—except for that "You and I" that skidded one past pumpkins and parties. (Lovely words those that didn't dump one off anywhere.) That got into the feet so one had to hold on to the banister going downstairs. Closing the street door, outside on the pavement now, they sent spring freshets all over Miss Mapes under the skin. And he hadn't known that he said them—that made it all the more wonderful!

This November air crisped a person up, took that feeling of never getting there away from the feet; turned candies and apples on push carts into jewels

on wheels. Behind distant glass windows gold was poured into vats; walking up to them she saw it was oranges.

Nearing Fifth Avenue, more stores bloomed—an artificial spring; hats and dresses, burgeoning under glass cases, stretched a hothouse menu, arranged with a tang of color to whet passers-by. One could imagine Mrs. Brazee nibbling there, or lifting jewels off Cartier velvet, winding them around her neck that looked as if it had been rubbed with oil until it gleamed in a seasoned way. "Rococo renaissance," the name for Mrs. Brazee's da Vinci smile, dressed up in the latest fad from Paris. One wondered about her, hated her—liked her—couldn't help it. Before she hung treasures round her neck she saw them clear for a moment. But sooner or later she had to own everything, would play antics to get things, even to Penny—until he gave in and smiled "charmer" at her. Then she'd wear his smile about for some minutes as a trophy.

In front of Fifth Avenue windows Miss Mapes felt like a ragamuffin envying wax figures in gold embroideries. For she wanted shoes, stockings, silk

underclothes—might steal, might do anything to get them, she thought—only for that "You and I," which put show windows sternly on the blink.

Mrs. Brazee didn't know the phrase then. And why hadn't Mr. Brazee, in whose eyes one could go back and forth, made her feel it?

And for whom did she keep herself so beautiful? Calling, "Miss Mapes, hips aren't worn this year, positively aren't—I'll have to get rid of them," on the telephone.

"That woman needs Shylock's knife," the Doctor had growled; "hand her over to Dr. Squires for the present." Dr. Squires—who sat in the middle office like a spider, had caught Mrs. Brazee there—spent hours planning her figure with her. "He even gives me thyroid, Miss Mapes," she sparkled, leaving the office.

And it wasn't only Mrs. Brazee. In and out with messages from Dr. Farraday, one heard him in snatches souffléing old ladies' symptoms. "Your soul comes before your body—your beautiful soul, Mrs. Stuyvesant!" And the woman lay in the hollow of his hand; never suspecting before that she had a

soul. "Really a most spiritual young man, quite a mystic"—was the way she made another appointment.

After he had taken care of Mrs. Van Peyton's pekinese: "He gives me an inner strength." Would Miss Mapes please explain to dear Dr. Farraday that Dr. Squires was better for Mrs. Van Peyton at the moment. "He has found out that my trouble is psychic."

Dr. Squires, a specialist on souls, had the ladies all in love with him. Looked at frankly, he kept a spiritual harem, right under Dr. Farraday's nose; they furnished his house and sent him flowers. "My little place is all cosy corners, Miss Mapes . . ."

Would she have a little dinner any time there alone with him? He asked her the question under his breath, behind doors, in back halls. Didn't want Miss Agatha to hear him. Ugh, how she hated him—his fat hips like a capon! And there he was now—in the flesh—an exhibit of the latest tailoring, framed in his little motor car ("Only a tiny Cadillac, Miss Mapes.") against the Plaza Hotel. (Very next-dayish the Plaza looked behind him, chalky and washed

out in the morning; going home past midnight, it had been riddled with windows like jewels.) Caught in a jam, Dr. Squires made signs to her. No, she wouldn't look at him, crossed in front of him. . . .

So the park was before her now, little moons put out by the morning, last night's mystery all gone. In the gateway—a policeman's back on a Rosa Bonheur horse with fat rumps. From the point of view of Phidias and Remington that horse was a failure, flowing lines from haunch to hoof all embedded; no far horizon in him—and what good was a horse unless one could gallop him out to the sun?

The "frosty pows" were embedded too in their club windows. Hopelessly, they stared beyond newspapers onto the pavement, its cold neutrality in their eyes. One could do them the favor of a highland fling—"*Tra*-la, *tra*-la, *tra*-la-la-la-*la*-la, *tra*-la-la-la-*laaa* . . ." "That woman, see, on the pavement, most shocking." They would call liveried boys to clear her away so they could look on the pavement again.

Around the corner, a little breathless now because the traffic was moving and any moment Dr. Squires

might lean from his car, she crossed to Madison Avenue, walking stiffly, the feel of that very horrible young man in the small of her back.

Across the street Mrs. Brazee's house had slipped back into its row. Last night it flaunted an awning. Top hats had flashed in and out; calls for carriages made her homeless. So had she felt in the country hearing a whistle thrown out at random through darkness.

And why did one quake in bed as a train thundered by green mountains, going so securely on tracks to its destination, sending out that cry with no destination in it at all?

So she pressed the button of Dr. Farraday's door. Just five years ago today she had seen the Doctor behind the iron grill. "I'm Miss Mapes." Her name had sounded to her as thin as a wafer.

CHAPTER III

"WART-HOG," Mary Ellen had whispered at what Prince Blavadsky only last month had called to Mother, "Miss Agatha's queenly back." "He used 'queenly' because he was hungry." He had eaten a big dinner afterwards. For "queenly" made Mother bring out a bottle of Father's best wine and put candy on the table. And wouldn't it be just like Agatha to give one that dimwit of a Prince *Dumbbell,* who was a cousin of the Czar, for a brother-in-law? Who never would have a cent to his name except what he got off Father—Father who never imagined that the Prince even existed.

Long before that "wart-hog" of Mary Ellen's, Enid Brazee lay in her room in the house opposite, watching shadows decompose into a dressing table, watching the patch on the chaise-longue whiten to a filet lace pillow; sickeningly she wanted to push the square back into the dark.

Across the hall Mrs. Jimmie Brazee's long lines relieved the surface of her blanket. "I am a rag. I

am all unstrung"—Jim left her so. For he was her lover, rapacious, a cave-man really; no one would suspect it—least of all Emmy Farraday—watching him leave the house, groomed to a turn by Martin.

"Rapacious"—before sleeping she amassed the night in words, which she could finger with her mind, looking at Jim's face opposite hers tomorrow—Jim, who in the daytime, turned her the casual face of a stranger.

On the floor above Jim Brazee lay awake. "Jim's cell," Madeleine called the place. "What a way to furnish a room, just an iron bed and a Bible—he might at least have a rug, Enid." For how could he rest with that Spanish monk on the wall, who must have been buried several weeks before posing. Whose frozen face turned the room into an ice box! Who cost more than all the rest of the house put together? She would have liked to stick her scissors into the celibate paint!

Still dark, not yet morning, relaxed in his bed, Jim lay waiting. "For what?" Madeleine would ask if she lay there beside him, not dreaming that there

could be anything left to come to a man in the dark, who had been her lover a few hours before. How she would laugh at him if he said, "I am waiting for spaces." "Spaces, Jim?" She would stop suddenly, wondering avidly if there could be anything for her there.

But she couldn't question him or laugh at his answers. The idiot boy who used to lie in biblical happiness beside Madeleine, his wife, twenty years back, had passed away ages ago. "Old silly," she used to call him. "Some one will have to get up and get breakfast," pulling his ears, if he could remember rightly. "Old silly" shadowed his memory now as some one to be laughed at very kindly, such a lot of idiots still about . . .

Look at Martin, his valet! More sense in him than in that boy who ran up a path in Bronxville (how Madeleine winced when he said "Bronxville"!), ran up between clusters of phlox to a wife making little eclipses of the light back and forth on the window upstairs.

"Beauty's only skin deep, as the saying is, sir—I wanted a 'ome, sir;" Martin had horse sense, made

a marriage of meaning. Never would Martin bound upstairs to hold a long-limbed woman in his arms, garnering her before he kissed her. "I don't 'old for this love, sir. There's other things"—Martin was right. Martin and his "five kids, sir," could look for a long harvesting.

Glad Martin didn't know about that first year of his and Madeleine's at Bronxville that ought to be set to soft music; the score being the tale of a boy worshiping one woman; distinctly Old Homestead stuff that belonged behind footlights.

Heaven was a shining Bronxville then, pouring out of a rift held open by Madeleine. "It's you, Madeleine, you are Heaven," the idiot would sizzle with ecstasy.

And, a year later, when Madeleine betrayed him, "I'm in Hell, and you put me there," he cried.

"Madeleine" he called the black stream that flowed through him then. Judas, the Borgias, his late partner, all the filth of the world was in its currents—draining swiftly through him, turning him into a Cloaca Maxima—

He had walked about then, an outcast on the

street, watching other people laughing. "They don't know what a Madeleine can do to a man."

He was grateful now for the ecstasy. More grateful though for the black stream that gave him his spaces!

Poor Madeleine, bereft of drama, he knew her now; so simple; just a woman who had to have things! He knew himself now as any boy largely made up of phrases and sermons—"To strive for peace and happiness—to avoid pain, beloved"—the lesson he'd got from Sundays and Sundays.

"Avoidance of pain." Except for the black stream he wouldn't have known it for the great danger. Seen it in the quack panacea Christian Scientists hand out in great doses. . . . Seen it in the "One-with-Godness idea" that mental scientists wrap their clients in to save them a twinge. Wouldn't have seen the lure of the newest religions as a kind of high-class fortune telling—with the cards shuffled falsely in favor of the congregation.

Now he wanted a pulpit himself from which to say: "Don't believe these purveyors; happiness is baby food, good to begin on. Don't cling to it; get

on to pain. Not until a man has been rinsed out by Hell is he released utterly for his birthright."

"Look at Job," not the churched Job. The church knew, like Martin, how to put up a façade in front of a man. It valeted him up—Martin couldn't have spruced up Job any better, his beard well trimmed, his kine and women about him. But look at Job as one knew him one's self; who after Hell had flowed through him cast the reward of circumstance into the scrap-basket of centuries. Marched, a bankrupt Job, a prince possessing his spiritual equivalent, which one knew as his spaces!

Madeleine's Jim had been given now very properly to Martin, his valet, who would come in this morning at eight o'clock with his claims, whispering, "Your bath's running, sir," to his rich master. Would close the window, turn on the heat, before he brought in "coffee and rolls and the paper, sir"—cleaned one, fed one, groomed one, so that one went out of the door perfectly tailored, a Jim Brazee like a façade of a house, polished and hard—a house in the very best row. So distinctly to be respected that

no one would think of looking in at the windows to see where the real Jim Brazee lived.

His façade was so closed and so heavily bolted by Martin that even he himself couldn't get through to himself in the daytime. He walked, Martin's Jim, through Wall Street, "a man of mystery" making money for Madeleine, who had to be kept.

He was Martin's Mr. Brazee at Madeleine's party last night, watching Wyrzinsky, the poor little Pole with saint's eyes, and hair for bird's nesting that no doubt meant a violin in the background, watching Madeleine walk about the ballroom, half naked, singing songs with her arms and legs, gathering glances.

She gathered in poor old Sir Eric, who made himself incense for her. "A demain," he had puffed over her hand at midnight; but even if a man puffed, Madeleine wouldn't let him alone. She had to stick the nugget of old Eric's desire about her wherever it set her off best. (Hadn't he himself promised her last night emeralds as big as pears for a dinner that was going to take place in the spring, for some Prince or Princess or other?) Men, clothes, jewels,

and cities—he got them all for her, "like a Dumas hero," she found time to tell him in her charmeuse voice. Her mouth curved up like a watermelon slice with pink depths to it.

Martin's Mr. Brazee knew how to treat a courtesan. Knew how to feed her—to deck her out—then to use her—a homeless thing—his windows and doors all locked against her. Knew how to leave her, to go to his room, throw himself on his bed, sight and feeling and the other four senses inked out in the night.

Waking up now, he was going to get through . . . knew it . . . could feel vastness and silence . . . waiting . . .

He was breaking through Martin's Mr. Brazee now . . . was behind the façade . . . Jim Brazee and his phenomena all gone . . . memory gone too (the idiot boy in Bronxville a husk to be thrown away) . . . was himself now, naked Jim, stripped of his body, a non-dimensional Jim, walking released, feeling the enormous stretches about him.

This was the mystery, then, that lay in men; reality, where space twisted time, made it limitless.

His Tiffany watch ticking under the pillow had

no equipment to measure the mystery of the ultimate Jim, a magnate of spiritual power, held by no boundary lines, owning boundlessness, knowing the unknowable. Jim Brazee, a real prince now, who could negotiate with his God, for even God would never cross over.

Before he went too far, if he looked back through his bolted façade, the street lay behind him. Madeleine there soliciting for emeralds, called, "You promised them to me." Across his shoulder he saw her clearly. Not Madeleine really, but Helen and Thaïs, walking in epic nakedness down the centuries; one of those greedy women who had to be locked out securely, because they used ruses to get to a man.

"You've had a bad week. You'll have a bad day ahead of you tomorrow, sir," Martin had said last night, putting studs in his master's dress shirt for the party. Craning, he saw the "bad day in Wall Street, sir"—strutting about, a little tin soldier with his blunderbuss aimed—who was saying fiercely: "I'll plug you if any one can." It made Jim, all-powerful, laugh to see him goose-stepping about. Hadn't he stuck the tin belly through again and

again? He saw himself there, too, very well tailored, no bigger than Madeleine or the toy soldier—he might get plugged himself as easily as anything!

Up here, playing with imponderables as familiarly as little Jim in the street with dollars and cents, it seemed quite possible that anything could happen to the Jim down there. The whole view was a tiny affair—Madeleine, himself, and the soldier didn't matter at all. He didn't care a damn for the whole lot of them—not a goddamn.

He was coming back now. Through his windows darkness weakened; the Farraday chimneys opposite rooted through the gloom.

Across the street poor old Farraday slept—a giant caught in a net—beside that shriveled doll Madeleine called "Emmy."

In the doctor's office Miss Mapes would be at the telephone in a few hours—Miss Mapes, a focusing mystery about her. A princesse lointaine in white linen, inaccessible and secure for all men.

Tonight the house over there would swarm. Enid there, a little stray cat, not his—but he wanted to feed her with the very best cream. He would be

there most probably—would have to give Agatha a present, a diamond watch perhaps—Martin would advise him.

"Your bath's running." And Martin, coming in now, closed up his façade entirely, bolting it securely against himself.

Well—for twenty years he'd fought "terrible days," off and on. Wasn't that the fun of life? To have no securities anywhere, take desperate chances, come out on top with an emerald necklace as big as pears for a courtesan.

"Disturbance in Wall Street."

His fight was in the papers that Martin folded beside his coffee.

Mrs. Brazee had sent word, sir. Would Mr. Brazee stop and see her a moment before going downtown?

Madeleine had sent the message, and wasn't it really like royalty to have to ask Marie to ask Martin to ask Mr. Brazee to stop in her room just a moment—Mr. Brazee, her own husband, who had been her lover last night?

CHAPTER IV

UNDER Mrs. Brazee's pillow eight o'clock was set in diamonds. Today, before he went downtown, she would tell Jim her secret—that's why she ordered, "Coffee, grapefruit, no sugar, Marie," so early in the morning. Nothing saturating about grapefruit, was there? One mouthful and one swallowed an enemy. So she dug a spoon into it—dying all the time for buttered rolls to go softly into the stomach; but as long as one's inner life showed in outlines, a silhouette must be kept, nearing forty, for future reference, as it were, to make effects against the lights after one was gone as a woman.

"I have to keep young for Jim—have to keep at it every minute. Hair dye only the first step—and how ridiculous for a woman to be wondering with a little pang if her husband had noticed it; when, wasn't the whole point of a husband that he didn't notice anything but himself?"

"Keep your quattrocento figure." Jim mocked her "quattrocento." Didn't know a woman wore words like jewels. Hadn't "France has a Gothic soul"

brought Wyrzinsky into her little circle last night? And here were the boy's flowers . . . "Two dozen, Marie."—How could he possibly afford it?—"Cut the string, Marie, the white roses here on the table—the orchids, out of the pink box, over there on the mantelpiece"—Dear old Eric. "Say it with flowers"—hadn't that red camelia with white orchids come for breakfast for years, asking, "When?" which might have been a potato for all the effect it had upon Jim.

Yes, it was because of Wyrzinsky she was going to tell Jim. ("Insane, quite insane, Mr. Brazee, and your wife's explanation only makes it more so," any doctor would say.) Nevertheless, Wyrzinsky had showed her last night. . . .

For she was standing in gold against a black screen at the party, tinkling: "How do you do? What a dress, my dear Lola. Jim, come and meet this beautiful woman"—clapping the dancer, whispering, "That fakir's a regular pincushion," to Eric, when she looked up and saw Wyrzinsky's eyes: boy's eyes, prayers, drawing her in. "I don't want your body—I have holy playgrounds for you," they said.

At that moment, "my daughter, Enid," came by —"I want you to meet Mr. Wyrzinsky, Enid, dear." Would Miss Enid give him the pleasure? Wyrzinsky danced off gayly with Enid. But his eyes that had invited her soul closed for Enid. Never had she known a man could be double-eyed like that. . . .

"What a dull little Jew," Enid whispered, returning. She knew he had been just that—a little Jew, closed tight as a submarine, to Enid.

In a flash, then, in a peak-of-Darien way, the undismissable surmise came to her. Behind the stranger Jim was a real Jim whom she didn't know at all, who had locked himself away from his wife twenty years ago, just as Wyrzinsky, in whose eyes she had privileges, was locked away forever from Enid. Jim—a recluse she must get to—had kept her outside playing with baubles. That "must" tortured her this morning at eight o'clock. Must—yes, but how? When for years, "Can—I do—anything—for you?", "Thanks—so—much" phrases had shuttled between them. Not a word handy to wheedle the real Jim with.

"Must" unreënforced sent her mind back to Bronxville. She ransacked the place.—After a bit she found a Jim who had been stuffed there for twenty years and pulled him out.

"Here's my whole day, bad and good, before I can love you. Swap days—tell me everything!" (He was talking beside her in bed twenty years ago.) "My day's so silly, Jim—" She held back until he coaxed out silk stockings and the most foolish bracelet she'd bought from their savings: "I meant to put the money back—you wouldn't have known. . . ." "But I want you to take it . . . take everything when you tell me . . ." adoring her. There was Jim's love of the truth, the only thing to help her, standing out, the last salience of Bronxville.

So she would tell him the truth in a question. "Did you know I betrayed you?", would kneel there, stripped, before him. And if that boy Jim took her in because she told little truths about silk stockings and a bracelet, wasn't it common sense for this Jim to fling open his doors to the largest possible truth?

And then he would swap truths. Say what he

guarded this very minute. For why did he throw huge emeralds at her? she wanted terribly to know. The mystery of it made her avid.

Waiting for him (and he gave her plenty of time), she spread out the baubles he had thrown at her, held them advantageously this way and that, to the light.

The most scintillating was Washington! "Where we will get the best house in the whole place—expense nothing" he said only four years ago dangling that city in front of her. Dazzling the real estate broker.

He had gone on to dazzle Ministers. Been right behind her when she had been awed by Ambassadors —seen a whole country, she told him, coming at her under a frock coat. "Ambassadors, nothing—imagine them at the head of Macy's and get a perspective." So he made them easy for her. For she was to remember that Washington was a cosmopolitan village. Was to wear plenty of feathers. (A tiara was Jim's conception of feathers.) "Hang the whole place round your neck, nothing is too big for you."

Washington came alive to her as he jumped it up and down on a string with: "Feed every one every minute," inviting grand ladies (who had left their slaughter-houses and stores round the corner in the West) to come and eat with the Foreigners. "Foreigners? Don't for a minute think they listen." When she complained that she swam under water talking to them, "You've only to keep up a sound like a party going very strong." And he could never say she hadn't worn the place round her neck; for weren't there bread-lines waiting for her entertainments?

He must have been afraid of her getting bored with Washington, for two years ago he had put her here in a house twice the size of Emmy Farraday's. "Get a taste for all cities, you're getting lopsided on Washington—take them as a sport—go on forever playing the game of conquering cities; each one has its flavor, has to be sensitively courted."

He said New York was an old roué. "Go ahead with him!" and he wound the new plaything for her: "For New York likes to feel a whip in its courting."

(And it was true, it would have been the greatest mistake if she had left the hatpins out of the fakir's program last night.)

"New York is capricious—every one can't please it." She had only to look at the houses of princes of finance, lying all fallow on the Avenue. And she saw herself that Emmy, dressed like a bassinet, could give dinners for Mrs. Van Peyton and Mrs. Stuyvesant to meet Bishop Archibald Pennington forever, and they didn't advance her a step; then suddenly a woman in a gold tea gown, Madeleine Brazee, put a few daffodils against blue tapestry—"That woman has a touch," every one said—and houses fell open before her.

Well, hadn't she conquered New York?

Wasn't she here in the papers today, in the first society column, every one at her party last night?—every one but Mrs. Van Peyton and Mrs. Stuyvesant, and those two old citadels didn't know they were already undermined to be delivered by the dinner to royalty that waited there in the spring.

She had been a jongleur with this last bauble of Jim's. . . .

A jongleur dying to say, "Old silly," to Jim, who was coming into her room now so quietly after his knock, turned out so speckless by Martin—the ears that she used to pull were tucked under his hair that might have been painted over his skull, Martin had made it so smooth. He was looking at her in a terribly solved way:

"What can I do for you, Madeleine?"

She had the truth all ready—wanted agonizingly to get out the words.

"Do you remember, Jim, on that steamer . . . young people, you and I . . . when you leaned over the railing with me? . . . your hands hanging just as they are now over the edge of the bed—the skeleton made a pattern under the skin. . . . I noticed it. Then that hand over there—it had the same gold seal ring—caught in my pearls, broke them . . . so we saw them coiling in the sea? (A fortune, I thought, buried in liquid marble.) 'Don't look so pale, Madeleine, don't worry, I'll get you real pearls; you have to have them, you know.' " (And he had got her rows and rows of them; some of them on her neck now hazed through her night-gown.) "Your

own face was opaque, Jim, your mustache and your brows stood out like trimmings."

If he said, "Yes, I knew they were real pearls," she had her answer all ready. "I did betray you once, Jim, just once." (See how she would unlock herself to him! He would have to open a crack of his door after that.)

Could he deny that it was because she had turned his old partner senile with love for her that he was taken into the firm—he, Jim Brazee, a young boy of Bronxville? . . . "Only a miracle could have started you, Jim, you had to have your chance." It was because she had sacrificed herself nobly—"for you, Jim"—that he had made his first million. His own brains? Any woman would laugh. A man's brains weren't enough. Why, if it hadn't been for her, they would have been in Bronxville now, with one maid and movies Saturday nights for fun.

So easy to speak to Eric, to say, "A woman had to have her setting; for he loved his dear Madeleine, because of her follies."—No getting down on her knees to old Eric, who wouldn't stand at the foot of the bed—turning her hands cold through her night-

gown—Marcus Aurelius, Simon Stylites: how could she get out a word, when there was no mercy in those men, or Jim, who judged one off a pedestal. Even if she did speak, she might flounder; Jim might stand silently leaving her, or he might push her down with, "How about Enid?", hold her there choking with that question, for which she didn't know any answer.

He was moving a hand now into a glove—so terribly transient. . . .

"Don't leave me alone," she wanted to say. (Said persiflageously, it would hold any other man.)

"Wyrzinsky is coming to tea—he sent these white roses." She held them up for him to smell. (He didn't even stiffen.)

What would he give Agatha? (For she wanted to keep his gloves from going on.) "I sent diamond garter buckles." The Farradays were terribly poor. . . . If he'd get something expensive . . . something . . .

Then, because Jim began to put on his other glove like an express train starting on the dot—no matter what, "Dr. Farraday really gives Emmy something to complain about," she threw out at ran-

dom. (For that might stop Jim from snapping the glove clasp, might put Dr. Farraday into his passive eyes.)

"Something to complain about? Dr. Farraday?" Jim left his glove alone now.

She could keep Jim a moment to make him defend Dr. Farraday; he wouldn't stay for her, but he stayed to say that a woman who had a husband like John Farraday, who by just coming into the room made other men's decorations turn into buttons, had enough.

As for Emmy Farraday herself, "The woman has maternal frenzy," Jim disposed of Emmy; a pistol shot couldn't have been any more final.

"But Dr. Farraday is really wrong in a sense"—Jim must let her explain. (He had slipped off both gloves now at that "wrong in a sense.") The Doctor was wrong because he could easily have sold some of his discoveries secretly for patent medicines. He had been approached over and over, Emmy had told her; it was often done in the profession.

And wasn't it ridiculous for horse doctors to make

millions on pills for horses—"Jim!" and for Dr. Farraday to let his family live on hash, which Enid said they always had at Nantucket? Wasn't it a husband's duty to give his family a chance? It would be *noble* for a doctor to sacrifice his etiquette for a moment. "Did you hear me, Jim?" She wanted to force the words into his face.

"Noble!"

She shrieked it to get that refusing look off him, as though she were soliciting him out on the street.

"John Farraday is spotless." Jim dropped the word, a white light, on Dr. Farraday's head. The masculine solidarity between the two men held like a wall.

No use— One had to be spotless! Jim wouldn't admit anything else. Wouldn't let her in any other way. Spotless! that was terrible, terrible,—but nevertheless, she would find a way to be spotless to that man who was walking now to the window; who didn't know that she was going all over him, trying to find an angle where she could stand for him to watch her, spotless; who was parting the curtains

now to see if his car, that always would be waiting to take him from her, was outside. Was saying, as if it were everyday news to her:

"I'll be back at six."

The phrase meant nothing to him; for her the words slid the day on to six. It stopped there all set, with Wyrzinsky sitting at tea.

It came to her: that's where she would be spotless to Jim, at tea with Wyrzinsky.

Coming in with the emeralds, Jim would see her there at six o'clock absolutely white to Wyrzinsky. "Having an astral affair with a first violin?" he would look. But she would hand him back his emeralds: "I don't want them"—would kneel to him there, Wyrzinsky or no Wyrzinsky—"Can't you see that I am spotless, rejecting your emeralds?" (Large as pears, too.) Seeing her that way, holy, bare of his jewels, he would have to take her in. And then once inside, if spotlessness in itself weren't enough, there was the truth too.

"A quarter to nine," snapping his watch. "There goes Miss Mapes walking toward the Farraday house. A high carelessness . . . the way that girl

moves." No mockery in his words "high carelessness"— Something in his tone made one crave.

He was going to the door now, opening it—she wouldn't get to the real Jim before six. And she couldn't bear the nine hours—wanted to get him now —had to. . . .

"Jim!" She was against stones now; the no-give in them bruised her.

"I'll bring you the emeralds." Jim's phrase tipped its hat to her, as he stepped through the door. Outside, through the opening, his eyes were inverted binoculars upon her—they left her so tiny.

CHAPTER V

MADELEINE BRAZEE slipped on her llama robe. The llama was all worn out of it, the red hood turned her hair a preposterous color. (She had said to Jim in Paris last year: "I must wear a celibate's robe for a negligée, scented with chypre." She had been all *jolie femme* at that moment, white gloves flashing around the antique shop. "C'est une fantasie faite pour Madame," came from the shopkeeper as Jim, remote as a llama himself, handed out bank notes over the counter.)

Outside Jim was getting into his motor. Adorable to Madeleine the way he moved, not even a latent strut in him! The chauffeur closed the door. No Jim now, only the shiny top of a motor gliding away. Miss Mapes could see him through the car windows—was smiling at him; was he smiling back?

That girl could be told a block away; people passing by seemed to trudge. What had happened to these women who had been in the war? . . . Granitic. "Won't you come to tea?" she had asked Miss Mapes, who refused like a woman from Mars who

didn't take tea: "Thanks, I have no time."—And left one sore, with that feeling of having hurled one's self. Anyhow there wasn't a thing in that girl appropriate for a secretary. Her hand now on the bell —one could drop a line straight from her collar bone to her heel.

Dr. Squires saw her. Came scooting up in his motor as the door slammed behind her.

And Madeleine followed her into the house, in front of Dr. Squires (couldn't help it—that high carelessness drew one), past that dreadful onyx table of Emmy's, over red-carpeted stairs into the Doctor's office at the back of the house, where he worked all day (and most nights too in the laboratory) with Miss Mapes—except for summer vacations. And who could tell what happened around New York in summer vacations?

"A doctor's wife has a great deal to bear, my dear. John never comes to bed now, working so late." . . . All Emmy saw was the nuisance of a doctor who never came to bed. "And the whole second floor, my dear, turned into offices. . . ."

And the Doctor's aloofness reached like a magnet across the street, even to a woman lying now comfortably in her own bed in the morning!

No ephemeral outposts for Emmy—no watching out—she didn't know what every woman should know who had her *métier de femme* around handy, that any woman could give herself across her tea table with, "Do you take one lump of sugar, or two?" Could be photographed and handed about a law court, her words officially innocent. Only there she would sit, pouring her tea, already possessed —knowing it.

Motherhood was Emmy's one aperture! She never saw that Agatha's Greek lines were out of date now, made one think of a cow pasturing; and who would want to dance with a cow pasturing, when Enid, a little panther in yellow velvet, would glide in and out? Enid who very particularly mustn't have any affair with that yokel, Pennington Farraday, who would be there tonight.

So Madeleine rang for Marie. "Tell Miss Enid her mother wants to see her. Tell Miss Enid to hurry, Marie. . . ."

Was Jim buying the emeralds over a counter now —fingering smooth green curves wanting the best —"the very best."

A woman so sure of six o'clock couldn't be blamed, could she, for hanging them on her neck just a moment . . . ? for she wouldn't even clasp them as she talked to a Crown Prince about fjords—Wasn't that the principal thing about Sweden?—at a Venetian table with old lace and fruit—no flowers, she wouldn't have flowers.

But they would use that gold set that Napoleon gave to Josephine—Jim had bought it for thousands! Only she must find out first from Eric whether Napoleon had conquered Sweden; unless one knew to the contrary it was safe to assume Napoleon everywhere. Wonderful man! If it were he sitting next to her at that dinner, she would risk everything. Whisper "le don de soi meme," murmurously, like Bernhardt. Jim wouldn't mind—would say: "Lassoed old Nap? Go ahead." Jim always right behind her with dollars and cents.

A terrible effort to push that dinner table out of mind. (Enid there in white satin and crystals—

judging by English pictures royalty liked young girls conservative—Dr. Farraday next the Queen—"Science rules the world, Prince," she might say excusing Emmy. Emmy an agony—every dinner had one—next to Eric.) Terrible to close the floor over it, to stop forgetting she was never to take a single bauble again. (As she tore off the emeralds right before Napoleon and the Crown Prince of Sweden.) "No jewels today," she told Marie, who came in to say, "Mademoiselle will be with her mother in fifteen minutes."

She would wear blue today, "Blue, Marie, unadorned like the November sky outside." She could see it now through the curtains, blue—blue. If she could only dip a great brush in it, paint the whole house sky color! "Costume de jour bleu, Marie." (Cosmopolitan mandates, Jim called her French phrases—always that little sneer in his voice.—They threw their tentacles across the sea, fixing Paris, he said.) And although Marie answered, "Oui, Madame," most politely, she must see that Paris didn't belong entirely to the French, when one American

carried away so much of it in trunks every year, and even little bits of the language.

"Will Madame wear her gold gown for tea?"

She would wear her gold tea-gown at five. "But no jewels, Marie, not pearls"—especially not pearls —"only the large ivory cross on the fine chain."

"Très simple," Marie said—yes, très simple for Jim. Afterwards, what then? Would she want pearls again? Dinners? Answers were shadows skulking beyond consuming desire. No afterwards—only six-o'clock Madeleine waiting homeless outside, waiting there all day—all her life if she had to—for the real Jim to call to her:

"Come in, Madeleine, out of the street."

CHAPTER VI

PENNY in an upper berth on the midnight to New York thought, "It's great to hear the wheels whirling . . . good excuse Agatha's party. . . ."

A good day's work to get Sammy Osborne on board. "Lemme be"—he had fought every inch down the platform into the arms of a white-coated porter. Safe now in the berth below, breathing like a blowpipe.

Every minute they were leaving Cambridge behind. Professors were dots, college buildings diminishing lines. Nothing could stop him now—nothing! For weeks, everything in him but what walked on his two feet had been running away to New York. Now, all of him together rushed on in the dark. Hadn't felt so easy for ages.

He wanted to cry, almost made a baby of himself in the autumn. Bushels of fun meeting the boys again in the yard. "Hello, Penny," "Hello, Sammy," "Hello, everybody," "Hello," all over the place. But after the first few hours no fun any more; boys, professors, sports and lessons all lumped to-

gether, just an interference between him and Enid.

For she had spoiled everything, wishing the everlasting question on him: "Does Enid love Larry Cammack?" So he was all exposed nerves to that question—it jabbed him anywhere, at football or lectures. Could she care for a rotter, a man with a wife and two children? Let an uncertainty like that fasten on a man, and listen to his head throb until he drank like a fish—and Sam had the stuff always ready. "Take it, it will wipe out any jane"—and it was the only thing that made one get rid of Enid for an hour.

All day the thought of Enid on a New York telephone helloed to him. Behind her "Hello," professors had droned. One couldn't beat old Paisley when one was tingling for Enid. "Read this sonnet, Farraday," the old man barked out. "Milton's best sonnet, one might say. With meaning, sir. We all want to enjoy it." "Stand and wait"—could you beat it? What did an old fool like Paisley know about life anyway, Milton either, a blind man who couldn't see things—only wanted to stand still in a sonnet? Made a guy laugh to take notes on waiting, know-

ing all the time he was going to catch the midnight to New York to his girl.

What had poetry to do with Enid, who made the roof and the sides of this car melt away, so that he was an entity, or whatever the word was, whizzing. . . . Her slanting eyes slitted through the night at him; made Agatha's seem round. Little cat Enid, who cuddled up to one as though she hadn't any bones in her body.

"Shut up, Sammy," he called down to the berth below. Wanted to think in quiet about Enid, but Sam didn't stop blowing. Sam gone for the night. One knew how he looked—a baby face on the pillow.

Because of that face of his, Sam got away with more things, had sat in his room all evening looking like a kindergarten kid, drinking, handing out smut talk to the boys. Give one drink to Sammy, he saw himself Don Juan all right—a war hero too, talking war talk. He'd been in the war just two months, and in a hospital afterwards—a whole year. "And don'cher forget it, not one moment." Could talk about trench life and wounds like a veteran, and then

when he got to Paris one would think he had known every jane in the city.

When he got to Paris there wasn't a sound in the room but his voice, not a piece of ice tinkled in the glasses—boys' eyes in the smoke, afraid that Sammy wouldn't go on. If Sam had enough drinks: "There was a little jane in Paris," he'd begin—and before he'd left off there wasn't a thing to wonder at. Janes were easy in Paris—"Easy everywhere," if one knew how to take them.

"Easy" slid Penny's thoughts back to Enid's bare ankles in black satin slippers last summer, dancing the Charleston under the rim of red pajamas. Visiting Agatha, but dancing a shimmy shake for him on the porch at Nantucket. (She had Agatha beat a mile); she was a red light trembling to the victrola, when Larry Cammack jumped over the railing with: "Hello, Kiki"—just two words. But they made Penny feel as if Larry talked a language to Enid that he hadn't known about. Rotters' language; rotters' hands that he held out to her as if he had known her all his life; so she let him take her up, a

red baby bundle, and carry her off to the beach, for that evening, and for the rest of his stay at Nantucket.

Larry's smile the next day made him feel all hands and feet before Enid—who put his heart in his stomach calling him "Little boy Penny," after Larry had petted her down on the beach.

Wished he could take girls like Sam, who managed a harem. "One was just like another—they'll all go the limit." An unlimited Enid lifted Penny up so quickly he caught his breath to keep up with himself. Then the thought of an Enid "easy" to Larry dropped him into blackness. Some day he would get even with that guy (he swore it to himself). He'd give it to him in the neck, give it to him in the nose; there wasn't any place he wouldn't give it to him. On the sheet Penny saw his own hand round and hard as a mallet. . . .

For Enid had been his girl. "I've never been alone with a man before," that first week at Nantucket. Would she give you a feel? You bet she would. Flames went over him at the thought of that night in the woods . . . after the picnic. . . .

"I am tired, give me a drink, Penny." She couldn't stand more than a teaspoonful. . . .

"Let's get left behind!" He had his arm round her brown sweater. If it hadn't been for Agatha's fog horn, "Penny—where are you?" through the woods, Enid would never have gone and left red-hot pincers sticking into a man for weeks. "Don't make her so sure of you. Can't you stop pawing her—can't you pretend you don't care a minute, so she'll come after you?" Agatha certainly used the big stick that night. But for a sister he had to hand it to her; as a sister Agatha was white.

"Come early Friday morning, get the midnight," her letter said yesterday. "Cut everything and come, for it's just about time for you to happen along and see Enid. Be sure [underlined] to send her flowers. Order purple orchids for her to wear at my party and white roses to put in her room. Order them at Thorley's and charge them to Father." Agatha never fumbled, was certainly a snow queen of a sister watching out like that for one with Enid. "P.S. Don't tell Mother; Mother would bungle everything. Leave it to me."

That was Agatha. "Everything will come out all right if you just leave Enid to me." Wouldn't let Mother speak to Enid about spending every evening with Larry; even when Mother heard Enid climb in through the window at three in the morning, Agatha had held Mother's mouth closed.

"I can't stand Enid so brutal to my boy," was Mother next day.

"Just cut out that sob stuff, will you? It gets us nowhere," Agatha's voice policed Mother.

But there were some things that mothers knew. "How any one who had ever seen my Penny could look at Larry Cammack." . . . Mother was a wonder at getting a man's feelings, although of course she didn't have Agatha's experience, but she followed very nicely, and she gave one the right dope about Father. "He'll think you've no right to marry Enid because she's rich. When the time comes to speak about marriage, I'll manage him!" and, Hell's bells, how she could manage Father!—you knew she would be a regular wizard when the time came.

That was where Father fell down; not always back of one like Mother, didn't know as she did

that one wouldn't think of marrying Enid for her money, that a gentleman couldn't think of taking money from any one else.

Wasn't "right there" with one about college, either, as Mother was. Because he had worked his own way through Harvard Mother said, he didn't appreciate how Penny had to be a regular fellow, tailormade clothes and make the best clubs. That the right men one knew, and all that, stood a man out in the world better than high marks. "See what the Brazees have done for Agatha," Mother often tried to show him.

Father couldn't face the fact that a man just had to gamble—Mother understood it perfectly! "Family counts, your grandfather is Bishop Archibald Pennington," and she meant that Father's father was a shoemaker, so he didn't see things quite as she did. Of course the old Bishop was a fathead—it didn't take college to tell one that all that myth stuff was damned rot that had to be pretended. Only if one had a Bishop for a grandfather it did make it necessary for Father to give one a larger allowance, didn't it? For cases came up in the world all the time

where a gentleman had to say, "Allow me" and then let the cost go.

The old shoemaker had had to save like hell to send Father to college; guess he'd put saving in Father's blood. "Now your father is dead, for the sake of the children, can't we forget the man?" Mother implored. And the shoemaker ought jolly well to hide under his slab, for he was going to make it so damned difficult for Mother to explain to Father that one had such bastard luck at poker; it was frightening to think of "Penny owes one thousand dollars" coming out of her mouth, although up to now she had been a winner. She had every other boy's mother beat a mile the way she got money out of Father. If only that damned old shoemaker in Father would understand that it was just because one wanted to get the first five hundred back that the second five hundred had gone. It was a cinch, any one would have taken a chance holding four kings. Any one knew he hadn't a bad heart; hated to lose money, especially now when there was so much of it needed for Agatha. Mother would understand the way he felt about that second five hundred; but Father always took definite stands. How

about the first five hundred—was Father. "That's because he isn't severe with himself!" Mother said. "Hasn't he spent over a thousand dollars in laboratory furnishings?" He needn't think she hadn't seen the bills. "Father takes his pleasure playing in the laboratory with Miss Mapes." And he had bum taste in secretaries, his own son could tell him, for Miss Mapes was certainly an iceberg in a laboratory, and no mistake about it.

"There's where millions have been wasted." Years ago, looking from the nursery window, Mother pointed at the little box in the yard; and all last winter: "If he'd used his opportunities, I wouldn't have to be patronized by Mrs. Brazee."

So if one asked him for a thousand berries, he might step lively and sell something; make it easier in the end for Mother. For a parent owed it to his children. . . .

For it was only the professors who seemed to think a lot of Father. What good was it to him when the Dean asked him to supper—the Dean who wouldn't believe he was his own father's son? "Incredible . . . incredible . . . we were honored by conferring a degree on your father last year"—and

that was another thing about Father, the degree hadn't moved him a bit; he didn't have normal reactions. That's why one had to keep things dark about Enid.

"If "Come right away" meant anything, it meant that Enid was through with Larry Cammack.

"With Larry Cammack;" so the old question was nagging; so it scanned with the engine, throbbed in his head—Does *E*nid *love* Larr*y* Camm*ack*—he couldn't bear it, couldn't get rid of it by himself, couldn't be expected to—not when he could slip down to the berth below and put his hand under Sammy's pillow. Good old boy, Sam, who had taken his baby to bed with him so that one could have just one more drink, then another, then just a last, until there was no doubt now about Enid's love. Larry wasn't in it. Enid was easy—Christ! she was easy—he could have her lips over and over again.

Penny's face relaxed, its lines oiled out. His feet hung, lay feet, out of his trousers. He had forgotten to take his shoes off. His breath puffed faintly from his lips.

CHAPTER VII

"Why in the name of hell had he taken that stuff last night?" Penny's mouth was furry, his head much too large for his skin. Pink things all over his face in Sam's mirror. Hadn't wanted a drink, could do without it for years now, and never miss it; had taken it just because it was there under Sam's pillow.

Sam, sipping a pick-me-up into his face, was enough to make a man sick.

"Looking for blossoms, Penny? Have some bromo seltzer, old boy?"

Sam had it like a prince, lying so comfortably there in bed in his striped pyjamas, a coat of arms on the pocket. Father asked, "What coat of arms could Sam's parent have a right to except a pig rampant?" But a check book, where one could draw "ad lib." was an answer. Sam had a swell chance, and he was nobody's sucker in college. Except for his boasting when he was drunk, "Sam was a gentleman," the boys said. But some fellows had it easy to be a gentleman—who wouldn't be one with two

rooms on Madison Avenue, and a father who didn't stand round and ask questions.

"Change your color scheme. Paint your whole face pink, Penny."

"Oh, close your mouth, Sam."

No use, Sam's powder wouldn't make a man's nose white. His best feature a purple bluff. Father would see it—would never say anything—but would see it. Mother wouldn't see it, would just see her beautiful boy. Was waiting for him now with a breakfast of pancakes and syrup if he knew her at all.

"Call up 58900 Butterfield, Sammy, good old boy. Say I'll be up in a minute." One could look very well in a suit after Sammy's valet had been at it! Hell! how a valet must save a man's time. And Penny watched Sam's soft hands holding the telephone so his voice dropped into it.

"Hello, yes, hello—Mr. Pennington Farraday will be at home in five minutes for breakfast. Hello! Who is this speaking?—Hello!—"

Sam's voice changed and broke, Penny saw him red to the rim of his curls, as if he would burst on

his pillow. Sam turning white now, dead white as the pillow now—not like a baby any more; nose, eyes and lips all sharpened together with eagerness. As he said, in his best English accent properly shaded, as if he were doing an exercise (hiding something, but he didn't get away with it—not for one single moment): "Who was it who answered on the telephone, Penny?" Who was it? What the hell was troubling Sammy? It was Nora, or Agatha, or Mother—or Miss Mapes probably. Miss Mapes, of course, Father's secretary, would be there if the family were still upstairs.

"Miss Mapes? But you never told me about Miss Mapes." Sammy accusing him—Sammy really cuckoo now, because why in the name of common sense should one talk about Father's secretary to Sam?—thirty if she was a day, and not like any girl Sam had ever chased round with. Some men might call her pretty, but at thirty a woman wasn't what she once was (thinking of Enid).

Penny couldn't remember about her hair; couldn't go into that "stood out like wire" business, didn't know what Sam meant—and really a voice over the

telephone oughtn't to get a man like that. Her eyes? "Set in with a smudge? I should worry. How should I know?" Really, Sam going nutty! In spite of his knowledge of women, having 'em bad. Just bowled over by the voice of a jane over the telephone.

He felt a father to Sam, reminded him that it was Agatha's party he was here for tonight, and that the wonderful voice called Miss Mapes wouldn't be there. Would be downstairs most likely in the kitchen, for that's where she belonged, or else she might be putting Father's laboratory straight.

Couldn't be bothered going on about the girl, anyway; for he wanted to hurry and order Enid's flowers outside. Wanted her to get them at breakfast in bed, where she would lie in something blue against lace pillows—not like Agatha and Mary Ellen—no mystery in sisters' bedrooms.

But Sam, not the man of the world he would have one believe, was keeping him busy answering more questions about Miss Mapes.

"Does she move with style so you'd turn around and follow her?"

"Don't be an ass! Come and look at her, then."

Penny grandfatherly now. "She's there all day." Easy to fish the girl upstairs from Father's laboratory any moment to look at, so what was Sam troubling about?

But Sam didn't feel like himself; his heart lost a beat, then went racing ahead. He'd taken too many to drink; that pick-me-up one too much; then the voice had upset him. "Was it, or wasn't it she?" He must hold on to Penny with his hands and eyes, might go off any minute if Penny unclasped his fingers; with his heart running away with him now a mile a minute; he'd known Miss Mapes in Paris, he said, but she couldn't be downstairs with the servants—not possibly. Only, the voice was just like the voice of a girl he had come across in the Tuileries—"One terrible night in Paris when I had the terror of the trenches on me." Was that high, thin tone his voice saying, "She took pity on me"? She was the kind of a girl Penny wouldn't understand. He had forgotten he had boasted about her when he was tight; but just now that voice brought her back . . . knew he had been a rotter, giving her away all over the place. "Just a dirty rotter"—breathing very

fast—"I thought no one would ever find out her name!" Wouldn't talk of her now only he felt so weak. But of course Penny would forget that he had spoken at all. Even without naming her it was vile enough of him to talk to the boys; he'd been a damned skunk all over the place, the worst kind of a skunk; but he knew it now for a change.

And he saw Penny's eyes narrow as they went ferreting into him.

For Penny knew for certain that Father's Miss Mapes had been in the war. No mistake there . . . same name . . . same voice . . . both in Paris. . . . He'd let Sam have it for all he was worth. "She was the little jane you met in the Tuileries—the one you told us about! Your jane in Paris! Don't deny it!" And Sam couldn't deny it, could only lie back on his pillow with eyes mad as hell at one's guessing what he'd just as much as told. Well, he had said it, hadn't he? A man would be a fool not to put two and two together. Father's Miss Mapes, Sammy's jane!—and who would have thought it, Sammy in Paris with that old iceberg, Miss Mapes.

Sam's heart was slowing up; he was coming to;

his sight clearing to the sharp lust in Penny's eyes. "I made a mistake about the name," he said very feebly.

But Sam couldn't make that getaway, Penny wouldn't allow it. "Miss Mapes, Sammy's jane!" Wait till he told it to Agatha! "Go to bed, baby," the way the woman treated him when he'd tried, just for a joke, to kiss her; mincemeat was what she made of Dr. Squires; had put on the airs of a saint all over the place! Sitting on the bed, Penny watched Sammy's face almost sober now, and the joke grew funnier and funnier when he thought what Father had got, all dressed up in white linen to take down messages from Mrs. Van Peyton and Mrs. Stuyvesant, those two old dames! "Would Miss Mapes do this—would Miss Mapes do that?" on the telephone—so polite to her, and Miss Mapes just a bag.

The other side of the question, not so funny—not so funny at all. There were Mother and Agatha—Enid, who he hoped was going to be Mrs. Pennington Farraday. They bunched suddenly in his mind, all of them exposed to this woman. My women under the roof with a bag! Good Lord! Penny

thought, the whole joke turning solemn. Good Lord!

Sammy watched Penny. Hoped his own heart would stop behaving so queerly so he could throw something at that ass on the bed, laughing one minute, and the next looking for all the world like that old windbag of a Bishop, his grandfather. (Penny thinking in a circle now: my mother, my own mother, my wife-to-be, and my sister. Good Lord!) Penny straightening up now with an air of, "Dearly Beloved." "You'll see her tonight—" he said, "you understand what it means to me if she is that trull you met in the Tuileries; that she should be there in my home with my mother and sisters."

"My mother and sisters"—and what business was it of Penny's anyway, to go on with a Bishop in his voice. He wouldn't have known a thing if the name hadn't slipped out because one was sick.—God, wait till I get to college to give an imitation of Penny in a towel and black band: "My mother and sisters!" He despised Penny sitting there, sniffing into a scandal—Penny who could be so damned cheap and never know it.

"You get out," he roared suddenly; then he

thought he was going to die, his heart jumped so. Saw a blurred Penny ringing his man's bell.

"You're crazy with drink," the blur called back, tiptoeing out. "And you'd better have a doctor jolly quick."

Sammy not a great man to Penny after all. Put it all over him, couldn't even carry his liquor. No pick-me-up for Pennington Farraday this morning, "I'll tell the world!" He could stand on his pins and order flowers for a girl.

"Hello—one bunch of orchids and a dozen white roses," he called over the telephone to Thorley, just as Agatha had told him. "Put 'From your devoted Archibald Pennington Farraday' on the card. They're to be sent to Miss Enid Brazee. Charge them to Dr. Farraday." Made him laugh to think that the fellow over the wire was writing down orchids for a girl as an order from Father—quite a gay life he was handing to old Father this morning.

At the stand he gave the cigarettes the look-over. "What have you there, my boy? Give me Egyptians." Lighted one—what were all these people coming and going across the black-and-white marble floor there

anyway? nothing doing in their faces—just people!

"A taxi, my man," at the door. Because of Enid, he handed out his last quarter.

"Gently, my boy," as the man lifted his bag on to the taxi.

On the Avenue, gay shops everywhere. Sam could buy anything in them, Jim Brazee too—lucky men those! But it was great to be in New York; one could never tell what might jump out at one in a big city. Pretty girl over there walking down the Avenue before nine o'clock. Behind her a wonder under a red hat, who gave him a smile. No girl in Cambridge a man ever wanted to follow—sink soap about them. Good cigarettes he had bought! Went down deep, all soft, into his lungs. And that bromo seltzer of Sam's was the stuff; two doses and a man could manage family breakfast. Could watch across the table—secretly—as he poured rich syrup on his plate, for a curtain in a window opposite to move.

"Just about time for you to see Enid," Agatha had written. Now the taxi was eating up asphalt toward her every minute.

On Park Avenue now; the place had changed in

three months. "Giant baby architecture, a nursery dream of a city of blocks come true," Sammy said. Wished he could say things like Sammy, who used that kind of language—"European," the boys called it. But in any sort of speech this was a great city, great to say, "I'm a New Yorker"—great to see Sixty-second Street now.

"Left! Left!" He yelled to the driver to go in Enid's direction.

What a day—Enid in it—Miss Mapes too. Sam might talk about buildings, but he couldn't fool Penny Farraday about life. If Miss Mapes wasn't Sammy's jane, why had he turned so white at the telephone?

"Here you are, sir."

Well, it made one damned sore to have to go in and ask Mother for sixty-five cents for the old cab —honestly! . . .

CHAPTER VIII

ENID burrowed her face into her pillow. Mother had no right to keep a girl always with governesses. She had decided that, talking about life with Agatha—last summer—in bed at Nantucket.

"You're a perfect baby, Enid. It's shameful nowadays to be so unsophisticated, never left alone for one moment, and every half hour arranged for! Your mother is keeping you in cold storage, so you can marry an old duke in the spring. She's told my mother so over and over again. You'll be a prisoner in his stone castle just the way you've been a prisoner to your mother all your life." Hadn't Enid read about titled foreigners beating their wives, taking their money, spending it freely with other women? Every one who knew anything knew that was true.

"I wouldn't marry a title for anything," Agatha said, "no matter how much my mother got after me."

"Have a good time with Penny. It will teach you how to manage men," she had whispered across pillows. It was a disgrace that a girl like Enid

shouldn't have had loads of affairs. For Agatha had had experiences. "I know life." Hadn't Sam Osborne kissed her, and Dr. Squires, and oh, lots of boys? She said she wouldn't marry any of them, probably.

When Agatha talked about the duke, who was going to shut Enid up in his castle, he hadn't seemed very real and Penny didn't make him real all that first week at Nantucket. Wasn't he safe, almost a year away, hidden at a party in London in the spring? She could leave him there and have a good time with Penny, who used to try and spoon all over the place.

Agatha told her not to mind Penny. "It's just his way. You'll be tied soon enough, then you'll be glad to look back on a real American boy, although you couldn't marry him!" But even that night at the picnic when Penny had seemed nice for a minute, and she had wanted to stay behind with him, even then the duke seemed as far away as ever.

But the night that Larry Cammack jumped the porch railing—(his thin face and eyes under the lantern most terribly near), she understood what Agatha had meant about the duke. . . . Saw him a

hateful, loathsome old man, pushing Larry away; saw Penny's face too, swelled to a pink blob, glaring at Larry who said, with no one introducing him: "Hello, Kiki," as if he had dropped out of the sky.

"Hello, Larry," Agatha's voice so cold— You'd never heard it before. And she made faces at Penny that meant: "Don't spoil everything making a fool of yourself." Penny—a little boy who might cry any minute at Larry's: "I choose Kiki."

Asking no one's permission, there Larry was carrying her off through the pine trees down to the beach!

And he said the loveliest things on the beach that night, and every night afterwards. For he'd cared for her from the first moment he saw her; she was a scarlet berry bobbing up and down under the lantern, he had wanted to eat her as he watched her secretly there in the trees. . . . Would she let him have one kiss? And then another? Until she wondered how she had stood Penny, a great awkward puppy bumbling . . . she hadn't imagined . . .

Even now the thought of the face so pale and

quiet against hers at the beach was the fakir's hat-pin of last night going into her side.

When she came back to the house that first night at twelve (because he had been so perfectly sweet), Agatha said she'd thought things all over, and had decided that Enid had a right to something in her own life, for wasn't she going to be a prisoner very shortly?

Even if Larry was a married man, Agatha felt he had every excuse. "Married?" The word had left one perfectly faint. He had a dumb wife ("why, Mother can't stand her") who took courses at college, wanted lots of children, didn't sympathize with that light side of Larry—"that troubadour side," Agatha put it—"that makes him so utterly charming." Enid wasn't to mind Penny's feelings; he was just a baby and didn't matter. "Go ahead and have a good time. You won't have any more chances." And she made it very easy for Enid to meet Larry every evening on the beach, where he told what a terrible mistake he had made. "My whole life—think of it Enid, with a cold woman"; it froze

him just to be near her. He was never going to see her again. . . .

"I ought to have married a Kiki." He oughtn't to say it the second time he'd seen her, but he couldn't help it. Did she understand? She was so sorry for him she began at once stroking his hair. It grew like a wave on his forehead. "You are my Kiki," he said as he kissed her.

He told her the same thing over and over again, and always with kisses. And then one night: "You are my wife, Kiki—my moon wife." And he carried her to "our little house in the dunes," where the moon was a lantern for them. "Made for each other" —didn't she feel it? "Made for each other," as he pulled her into the shadows. Then, after holding her in his arms for hours and hours: "It's time to go bye-a-bye."

She knew she had always been lonely before, she would be lonely again, for wasn't he going away tomorrow! But she hadn't known she could feel like that, as if Father and Mother and Agatha didn't matter any more. As if nothing mattered except to lie closer and closer to Larry Cammack, hearing,

"You'll never regret . . . I adore you . . . I never loved before . . ." So the stars went out—and the beach. So the water was a long silver stretch where nobody was. So it was Mother's fault—somehow . . . all those governesses. . . .

It didn't seem right for him to let her go home alone to Agatha's house afterwards. "For your sake, Kiki, not mine." Saying hoarsely that it was three o'clock; did she suppose she could get in a window without Mrs. Farraday seeing? He was in too much of a hurry to kiss her.

"Of course, I'll write." Didn't she trust him?

Almost roughly he pushed her into a coat. Of course she was his moon wife. Hadn't he just shown her? Of course he would see her in a month, a week, a few days—if she *only* would hurry—

She heard him say her address over like a lesson, then, "Be quick—be quick—" All in a frenzy to have her go, just the opposite from the first part of the evening. Looking back from the turn of the dune, he was waving her on with his hand.

But he *did* love her. She had only to think of that evening, eight weeks ago now, to feel his love from

her head to her toes. At parties even. Last night curtseying to that old Sir Eric, as Mother made her do, "Larry loves me," cut a curve under her heart. "He loves me as Sir Eric never in his old life could love any one."

After she had crept into bed his last night at Nantucket, she wouldn't have minded if Agatha had known everything, she loved Larry so. Was proud to be his wife, Kiki (his moon wife), would have liked every one to know that he loved her, especially the unkind, cruel woman he'd married. "Larry loves me, really loves me. We were made for each other," she had begun.

But Agatha wouldn't listen. "I'm too sleepy." She wouldn't hear that it wasn't just an affair. "I absolutely trust you, Enid." She insisted on trusting one. The only thing Agatha understood about was the duke. "I guess this does for him, Enid." She turned her face on the pillow, wouldn't talk any more that night.

The next day Agatha kept on trusting, one couldn't tell her the truth, but she was just sweet about Larry. If Enid and Larry had decided that they

couldn't stand not making love any longer (trusting so hard that she made one feel terrible guilty) divorce was easy.

"Just wait for him. Don't see another man except Penny, who's a baby and doesn't count," was her advice.

So they whispered about the wedding in bed at Nantucket. And Agatha said, "Dress me in pink," making it come real.

When Larry didn't write, Agatha had often seen men behave like that, and then come across; "watchful waiting is a girl's best policy with a man;" and Larry was probably arranging everything. She would have died without Agatha. It was dreadful to have to go home in October.

Meeting Mother at the station, one thought, "If she knew!" But Mother only said, "You're pale," didn't see you were a corpse inside with the want of a letter from Larry. So it took minutes to get courage to say in the motor: "Is there any letter for me, Mother?"

"Only invitations, and piles of them." Mother spoke in the jolliest voice, like handing out Christ-

mas presents. "Don't tell me you've been flirting with Penny Farraday . . . remember the coronet." Mother so gay she made one want to scream. Ages one waited for Bennet to open the front door, so one could pass by the hall table under the stairs where the mail lay. . . .

Hard to look at its empty polish as if nothing had happened—to say: "Oh, no, I didn't expect any letter, Mother, I'm just dying for tea." Drinking a cup afterwards, talking about parties—she never wanted to see a Sèvres cup again.

That was six weeks ago. Every day since then that whitening pillow. Its corners cut out another day when no letter would come.

But today was going to be different because she had written to Larry, and registered her first letter, two days ago. He had it now, knew that she cared, wasn't the kind of a girl Agatha said some girls were —"loose, positively on the loose with every man." She had told Larry that she still adored him. Wanted him to know that as soon as he could get rid of that dreadful woman who was ruining his life (hadn't he said it over and over?) he could be *sure* that his

Kiki would marry him. She didn't blame him, but there were reasons—he would have to imagine why —she was terribly anxious. Couldn't possibly tell him in a letter what they were, only she was so alone he must realize how she wanted him. Couldn't tell her mother *anything*, for all Mother thought of was parties, and a duke who was waiting to marry "your Kiki." But Larry must know that because of her terror he must please write immediately to say when he was coming to help her. Wouldn't he please write that she was his moon-wife forever and ever . . . until then. . . .

The pillow was very distinct now—not to be avoided as Marguerite opened the door softly.

"Du café pour Mademoiselle." (Under the napkin there must be a letter.)

Marguerite putting the tray down carefully, laid a folded paper beside it; was busy now bringing "just a leetle basin of water to refresh Mademoiselle"—was drying one's hands.

"That's all, Marguerite—all."

But she poured out the coffee so slowly. Now—now she would go—but she stayed to break the eggs.

Then she pulled up the shades, moved the curtains. Now at last her black back was against the door, so one could raise the napkin and look. . . .

It was eight weeks now! She had waited every day of those eight weeks to find that letter from Larry that wasn't there now. That wasn't there! So her head filled up from her body, and emptied again, leaving her sick on the pillow.

If she could only make Marguerite understand that she didn't want any breakfast, that it was all horrible to her—*petit pains* and everything—that she just wanted to be alone; that if Marguerite stayed, she would throw the whole tray at her. She itched to, would have, except for a box of flowers that Marguerite took from the crack of the door, crying: "Fleurs, fleurs pour Mademoiselle!" The air streaked in front of her eyes, because it would be just like Larry to send a letter in flowers; the troubadour in him, saying that he was near.

"Let me see the card, Marguerite, *vite, vite.*"

"Mademoiselle était tout au bout d'elle même—elle tremblait," Marguerite said afterwards in the kitchen.

"From your devoted Archibald Pennington Farraday"—she read. She couldn't look sick any more—was suddenly afraid that Marguerite was watching her queerly. So she must smell Penny's white roses, and say very carefully to Marguerite to please put them by the bed in that long crystal vase.

"Mademoiselle was waiting for the flowers!" Marguerite understood now—Marguerite all bursting with smiles was arranging, "des roses magnifique," close to the bed.

Enid opened out the paper; hid her face behind it—she couldn't cry until Marguerite got the flowers fixed.

In the headlines blind soldiers were marching in Paris, silly thing to do—if men were blind, couldn't they stay at home? Miners, and they never seemed to learn not to go underground, killed in an explosion—and why did France get into such a mess about money if she couldn't get out? And in the social news, Enid Brazee was receiving tonight with Dr. Farraday's daughter . . . "Mrs. Brazee was bringing out her daughter, Enid Brazee, next month at a large ball at the Ritz." Next to her party, "Mr. and

Mrs. Larry Cammack gave a large dinner at Sherry's last night"—about a hundred guests. "Among those present,"—but she couldn't see the list, it blurred so. . . .

These things could happen; "Moon-wife—Kiki—" then when one knew the worst, called him to help her, there he was close to her, giving a dinner at Sherry's to the woman he hated.

"No, Marguerite, I'm perfectly well. Of course I will." For Marguerite was saying that Mrs. Brazee wanted to see Mademoiselle most particularly.

He hadn't even cared then. The thought squeezed her heart—squeezed it perfectly white.

CHAPTER IX

Waiting in the street—and, damn it, why didn't Nora hurry to open the door, Miss Mapes heard Sammy Osborne's telephone ring.

"And why should I hurry to open the door to that woman?" Nora would like Bridget to tell her as the front door buzzed in the kitchen. Was it any wonder that the help got upset? Miss Mapes, speaking so haughty, and sometimes sitting down at the table. One could never tell who was the lady, and who wasn't, nowadays. This place didn't suit a girl much anyway—Dr. Farraday going so late to bed, for one thing. If he left the house to amuse himself she wouldn't so much mind, but she had never worked in a place before where the gentleman had a shanty in the backyard with the neighbors looking on to see as much as they could see. . . . And why did Miss Mapes scrub the place in the dead of the night—"Your hands in the suds the same as meself"—she had it right on her tongue to ask the woman.

"And if there weren't any soles to her shoes stick-

ing out of the door, that might be the reason she works in the dark," Bridget imagined, laughing so loud that Mrs. Farraday heard her upstairs, and knocked outside the bathroom panels. (Only a moment ago in her pink wrapper, taking out paper butterflies that left a curl in her hair, she had said: "These beds are what the débutantes will put their wraps on tonight," making it almost indecent for a man to lie any longer on maidenly ground.)

"It's half-past eight, John. Hurry and shave for breakfast. Remember Agatha." Emmy made Agatha's party an oncoming express train—one had to keep moving. (And the front door closed downstairs. The sound stood out from other noises. His ear had been waiting for it to come along. It said almost certainly that Miss Mapes had got safely home last night.)

Warm air flavored with coffee and something frying closed over Miss Mapes. In the dining-room the sun splintered the silver on a white table-cloth. "Good morning, Nora," and no more must be said, for Nora complained that she had all she wanted in

this house, listening to that Miss Mary Ellen's talk.

Poor Nora, poor Bridget, and Martha (Miss Mapes hung her coat in the closet, in a strong smell of rubber), there wasn't a Christian rule to apply to any of them. "Sorry to trouble you, thanks," from the Doctor, and genteel lines wavered for Nora. Her instincts felt democracy creeping in. She glowered. Right, too, for in a democracy—where was a servant? They fattened in the soft margins of life. Didn't one pick the best out of unearned increment? "If I could get a place at Brazee's" trumpeted out of kitchen windows. As long as the Brazee house stood a castle opposite—maids and second men dressing the walls, Noras were safe. She and the Brazees moved in parallel lines.

"If the Doctor doesn't hurry for breakfast—" ("I'll give warning," crept its silent sequence after the sentence. "Giving warning," the reserve arsenal of Bridgets and Noras and Marthas.)

"If-the-Doctor . . ." Didn't every one in the house use the phrase hyphenated? "If-the-Doctor would get a butler and kitchenmaid, he could economize in his *personal* help," sprayed through the

house every time Mrs. Farraday got tired. Agatha's "If-Father" might go on for hours. Penny's letters (great inescapable "ifs") put a predicament on the Doctor's face. Only Mary Ellen never said "if"—nothing tentative about Mary Ellen's relation with Father.

"Father"—she called right inside the front door; so the sound went all over the house. Her voice registered out from his eyes. . . .

Under Miss Mapes' feet the nap of the red stair carpet was worn. Slowly she had walked behind Dr. Farraday over this very same carpet five years ago. A sag all through him that night. "That man can't stand much more"—the war had made her note it.

She had come—did he ever think of her like that as coming or going?

"Hello, hello," she called now in the office to a voice that said out of Dr. Farraday's telephone, "Mr. Pennington Farraday will be right up to breakfast"—would she let the cook know, please? That meant pancakes, she thought in parenthesis.

Of course she would tell the cook. "Good-by." After she clicked down the receiver, "Whose voice

was that?" She had heard it somewhere. "Where, then?" The answer, echo of a lost echo . . . no, she couldn't catch it.

"Mr. Penny will be here for breakfast, Nora." From the office door Penny's imminence dropped—a martyr's crown (very thorny) on Nora below.

Dr. Farraday's office door, closing so soon after the front door, put Miss Mapes for the doctor, "beyond peradventure" (good, sedative phrase) safe and sound inside. At this moment she would (presumably) start the day—Agatha's day—by dusting his desk.

(Once, he remembered, a china doll with blue eyes had been a whole jubilee for Agatha. He saw birthdays rolling downhill—gathering, gathering—parties . . . roadsters. . . .)

Another date. No one else remembered that five years ago, "I'm Miss Mapes," had walked in from the street like a woman in an Irish play, floating in from the sea. (He had never got a straighter look.) Handed him a letter from Dr. Blakelock "over there," wanting to know, timidly, would he be so very kind as to read it? Dr. Blakelock had thought she

might be useful to him; that was why she had come. She wanted work—"oh, very badly" . . . only a few dollars left . . . so he could see. . . .

Seated behind the mahogany desk, she was dusting now—probably— "What have you to say for yourself?" he had asked her. (He had cared more for that than to open the letter—cared surprisingly.) She hadn't anything to say for herself, except that her roots were torn out of the ground—lying about! "I'm deracinated"—did he know what she meant? Did he think it a ridiculous word?

There was his question and her "deracinated," and Miss Mapes under the lamp, looking at him across the ink-pot on his desk—as clear now as on that first night. His own comment remained too; no secretary had ever given that kind of reference before.

All the time that she sat there limp and dumb, he was reading down in Dr. Blakelock's letter about "a girl with a croix-de-guerre for bravery under fire; some one to be counted on, who has never failed in a duty for four years."

"How about 'deracinated' with a decoration?" He

had pounced the croix-de-guerre in the letter at her. After all it was something to have! (There was one pinned on Mrs. Van Peyton's breast—bright color on a prominence.) "How about it, Miss Mapes?"

Well "this" was why she hadn't mentioned it. It hadn't seemed real to her, "under fire" . . . Yes, she remembered everything. Of course . . . of course . . . but broken up into little bits, here and there. It was the whole four years of war that hadn't made sense to her.

That first night she stayed as deep eyes in a whiteness, a hand brushing away the croix-de-guerre.

"All the time over there I wanted something real. . . ."

Because of his hospital in Washington, could he understand—her elbows on his desk—what it meant not to have a word of sense to say to men with gauze stuck in their brains? "Men who suffered so"—she searched for a word with him and found it—"so ignorantly"? Could he see how one "lived imminently, over there?" Just from moment to moment, giving everything, assuaging always? "It was just that, Dr. Farraday"—assuaging, nevertheless,

always blood that couldn't be staunched. "Blood—everywhere. . . ."

What if the senselessness of the war got into her head? Another reason why she had come to him. For Dr. Blakelock had said: "Dr. Farraday will give you something real to hold on to." That was after she had been to the chaplain, told him she could feel pieces shaking around in her brain, wanted some one to say how to put them together again. "Pray and come back—pray without ceasing," he had dismissed her. Would the Doctor think her mad if she told him what she had told the chaplain over there?

"I'm thinking too much about the girl, not a doubt about it." And Dr. Farraday stropped his razor. Five years ago was five years ago. Just now he was shaving. Could interrupt his own thoughts, push them heavily into the present (was doing it creditably), saying to himself. "Rather a Galatea performance, this shaving, a daily emergence out of the lather. Nineteen strokes today" (must be firm with himself). He had shaved himself out last week in twenty-five, once had done it in twenty; twenty had held the record so far. "Nineteen today." A

man had to invent some game around the anthropoidal menace, or perish, didn't he?

Today he'd score thirty. (Damn it, he'd cut himself, trying to keep out Miss Mapes.) Must stop thinking of her. A man with a family simply had to keep himself intact on the artificial patch he had cleared from the jungle of life (good thought—he had his pace now), wasn't going to let anything in, even a slip of a girl who had questioned him that night . . . years back. . . .

Would he think her mad, as the chaplain had done, if she asked him: Did he remember Blake's Nebuchadnezzar? Why weren't those words strange to him from a girl coming in out of the night? Why wasn't that evening an adventure? The damnedest kind—Queer not to even say to himself: "This is unique." Just to sit there, feeling perfectly natural, expecting her to ask if he remembered "that picture—of a man's face looking out of a crawling animal body weighted down by its claws that kept tearing the earth.—The man was forever oppressed by himself —knew that he was all animal. She had shuddered.

Didn't see how Blake could have that picture in his head without going mad.

"Did he?" she asked. That's just how she had felt.

All through the war she'd seen that animal mangling both Huns and Allies alike with his claws—that made no pattern at all. Safe—because it never occurred to the men to get off each other and start fighting him.

Would he simply *promise* he wouldn't think she was crazy; she hadn't dared tell the chaplain that she had seen Nebuchadnezzar in the sky too, disguised by wings that flew over the hospital, always between the wings his buzzard center, spitting, and spitting. "I envied the women who had given themselves to the whole army, made themselves part of the animal, got lost in it for a moment. . . ."

It was when she had to close dying men's eyes silently, "so unreconciled," knew she could kill herself, and still there would be no sense to tell them—that she got deracinated. Now he understood—and she'd smiled her smile that he knew so well afterwards; it stopped under her eyes.

"You'll never give me work because I said that silly word," she told him.

What did she remember best about the whole war? "Honestly?" Did he want her to say honestly? "Well, truthfully, it was the first Turkish bath I took on leave in Paris, Dr. Farraday." Until then she had forgotten she had a body at all.

"Breakfast, John!" He heard the imminent début in Emmy's voice from downstairs. Wasn't it the Jesuits—damned clever fellows, too—who had discovered that a hammer was gentle compared to that "John" dropping always in the same place?

Miss Mapes heard Mrs. Farraday's voice stretched thin, in that "John" outside the office. Wished she could pop out through the door and say: "You have my sympathy pulling the Doctor and breakfast together"; a woman's job. All women knew it as far back as Mary, whose job was to get the sky and the earth together. Poor Mary, Miss Mapes thought, hearing:

"Hello, Mother," from Penny.

"Hello, Penny darling." Mrs. Farraday through

the door making really lovely noises over Penny "away from home six whole weeks," till her voice came out sharp: "You let me settle your father." Then Miss Mapes heard her own name jump out as if some one had stuck a knife in the woman; as Penny laughed his tolerant man-of-the-world laugh.

"You leave Miss Mapes to me, Mother." His view of life so panoramic: any woman was a puppet easily managed.

"Penny, you are so clever." Mrs. Farraday was feeding her boy Penny on sugar. Silly Penny, always lapping up sugar (especially silly, after one sweet look from Enid).

Penny's sneer hurt Miss Mapes—had to be blown away—a speck in sensitive places. The moving vans were coming at twelve, that was the point. . . .

And two tests to be tried out at Dr. Farraday's in the next twenty-four hours. Agatha's charm test —the oldest fetish that survived in the ballroom— and pioneer truth in the laboratory down in the yard. Pioneer truth! She needed "Never fear" to hitch up her heart.

His mail! Came in like the tide. (Bills! Parasite

bills that sucked strength out of the Doctor—would he never escape from them? Never?) And she put a letter from Stanchfield University, Special Delivery, against his inkpot, because somehow it looked interesting.

The first night across this desk she was dusting he had sat against a wall washed out with cheesecloth. Pictures and fixtures all done up in it. Strange for her, coming straight from the war, to sit under a lamp so carefully bandaged, hearing: "You're Miss Mapes—what have you to say for yourself?" Her name rounder and fuller, more like a cookie, in his deep voice. He looked remote—on the top of a mountain—she down in the valley thinking: "He isn't going to listen, he's going to be just like the chaplain. Every one is like the chaplain, no man ever listens—" then, all of a sudden, he was in the valley beside her; his eyes were a quiet seeking. (His microscope look. She knew it now; then, she had never seen anything like it.)

For he wasn't in the very least like the chaplain—turned chaplains into excrescences and supernumeraries—understanding how a girl could go to the war

on shallops of words—"Safe for democracy," "Down with the Huns." Fleets of shallops, waiting to take her across. Then over there at the hospital, how words hung like mottoes in the air over the sick, to make the crossing worth while—"War to end war." "Home fires." Endless mottoes—

Nothing the matter with her mind, he said. She felt Nebuchadnezzar because he was there—"that's simple, isn't it?" Felt him coding out greed.

"That animal's body with a man's face is the oldest animal in the world, Miss Mapes. Greed; with claws that lacerate." Even now the words stood out like a caption.

Across the inkpot (she was rubbing up the brass top now). Hadn't she done those problems of, "If I get it, you don't," at school—in Euclid he'd asked, "Well then! Put yourself back in school again." He'd draw it for her here on the blotter. "If one triangle owned a certain space, another didn't, and that was all. No claims, no allies in geometry; wasn't it all beautifully simple? Q.E.D. ends every dispute." One triangle's possession could be settled for eternity on a blotter?

No such thing as human geometry. "That's where men fool themselves, Miss Mapes." As soon as men work out, "You get it, I don't," to a conclusion—the border lines get up and walk about like Alice in Wonderland. Then you feel Nebuchadnezzar stir in the mess.

Would people always claw each other to pieces, and if that were so where was there any place to feel safe? she'd asked him. Hoped so much he would say, "God," giving her something embosoming, all ready-made, where she could rest. She didn't want to hear "that the unknown, conquered" was the only safe place he knew of; that war on the unknown was a hell of a fight, "For it ends only in death." She didn't want to get up and fight; on the contrary she wanted to sit down for good. Just the same she'd held the words in her mind. . . .

No need for words now; now she knew—hadn't she seen his Idea in the test tubes? The army of conquerors, waiting for certainty so they could march on and on, conquering. . . .

It was right after that "hell of a fight" that he

had asked her, would she work for him? Would she come the next day at eight in the morning? . . .

So she moved quietly—keep work under the mind, and one can go on thinking. There was more to scoop out of memory—an indispensable "more"—

There was his face—above the sheets on the table, the towels on the rack, his bag to be packed, stethoscope, instruments, little bottles—oh, yes, scissors too; she mustn't forget scissors—there was his face.

Above books, papers, his desk drawers to be locked. (Hurry, hurry, she must hurry, the Doctor would be down any minute now.)

There was his face . . . its pallor—the blood that had settled under the eyes! "You're hungry. You haven't eaten all day," she'd told him.

And it seemed the most natural thing to run downstairs to the caretaker. "I've done this before in a dream—" was the way she had cooked his first meal, served it to him on an old tray. "Aren't you hungry, Miss Mapes?" But it was he that was hungry. "This omelette puts the sun up in a man's

stomach." (He gobbled it up—as he had last night.) And what could one do with a man like that? If she brought him other things he needed: peace, green hills, no parasite bills, she could see him sitting on a hilltop saying: "I didn't know I was tired—but other men are tired. . . ."

Lovely friendliness of a bath! The doctor lay in it, soaking peacefully. Hollowed it, tore it, and it fitted again; not a seam in it anywhere. Longed for it to deepen—to swim in it, lie and rest on it. Only civilized man had cleanness doled out to him in a porcelain tub. How a savage would laugh at lax muscles in a dishful of water, remark aptly "This is all that is left in the city of man's savage plunge into vast silver privacy."

So many men lying now, safe, immune like himself, in their tubs, sure that outside the old earth was conquered. They'd been smart—held her down with city pavements, staved her with steel tracks, sent cars thundering over her—no fear, no breast-to-breast fight with her any more! . . .

But the earth lay biding her time. Her teeming

smile waited under granite. Great courtesan world, wanting body after body to use in make-up on her old face. Got everything at last, citizens and savages and armies—smeared them all on her. Got everything but the Idea that floated above her. The Idea, an ascetic, wouldn't let tree-top fingers touch it—a celibacy in the Idea.

Wanted to be warm and relaxed all day; only other men were tired too, other men bone-tired. They came to him in his office, a "taking-them-up and a laying-them-down look" about the feet. Behind their eyes was a weight. "I must get up now, as they do; it's the band-of-brothers idea gets a man into livery." Then the damnable iteration of things catches hold of him, carrying him along on its current. The rush would motivate for him, he could dismiss his own legs.

And downstairs Miss Mapes heard a window go up.

It was Dr. Farraday, dressed, scanning the back of his house.

He waited—saw no sign of Miss Mapes. Saw

against the laboratory door, a line of wash that fluttered. Knew Mary Ellen's red school apron dried with the strings hanging down. Exciting Mary Ellen! Nothing lay heavy in her! No matter how classics went in they always came out Mary Ellen. Hadn't she learned Shelley's "West Wind" for him, and then said: "Payments in music, please, Father."

That red apron brought her right through the window, it showed through her open coat at their last Bach concert, where she held his hand. Little squeezes from hers, marking the time of the golden intricacies that went piling on, piling up—Bach's Idea coming nearer every minute . . . inevitable . . . then when it ceased, all the strains immortally locked, Mary Ellen whispered: "That's your Idea, Father." He hadn't imagined it possible! Children didn't belong all to their mothers, then. There were spiritual wombs they re-entered. . . .

"John! John!" Emmy made a gong of his name. It brought the whole day down on him—wanted to make a marionette of him—wouldn't rest till he danced to it!

If it brought another failure? Suppose he ought to feel it did its work on him—whacked him each time more of a man. *That's* the dope he would hand to Penny—calling now, "Hello, Father." Dear old Penny—who would want money—always did—all boys did. Penny wrong about almost everything, God bless him. Would be, until he got to work. Work. That was the answer—sweat-of-your-brow perscription; nothing else like it . . . growing medicine for children. . . .

And old Bishop Archibald Pennington imagined that he satisfied needs by handing wafers about did he? Well—they weren't enough. All children were hungry. Wanted more than wafers. Wanted the bread of life—great slices of it—never imagined that they must cut it, each for himself, from his own loaf of bread.

Dr. Farraday smoothed his thick hair with brushes like castenets, called:

"Hello, Penny."

There wasn't any one in the world, he supposed, that a man had quite the same feeling for as he had for his eldest son.

CHAPTER X

THE pull of family breakfast slacked a moment before his office door. If she weren't behind the panels at all! After all any one could bang doors . . . he paused. . . .

Downstairs Penny heard himself chew in the silence. Mother looked like a page turned in Fox's *Book of Martyrs*—"Turn me, I am done on this side," Sammy called that look on a face.

Upstairs Agatha crouched, eyes wide and fixed through the banisters; one had to watch Father, now that Penny had found out about Miss Mapes. One couldn't be any too careful!

John's feet waiting in front of Miss Mapes's door; Emmy knew the square-toed shoes on a red carpet, knew a white linen dress on the other side of the panels. Also Nora's "sword-of-Damocles" look as John called it, was gathering very strong.

Selfish—John was selfish; could a woman keep house around such a man? Wanted meals to run after him, then when they caught him, half the time he wouldn't eat them. "May I have crackers and milk,

tonight?" he'd ask, letting four courses go by his chair. It wasn't the milk and crackers she minded, only why couldn't he take the trouble to tell her in the morning just what he wanted to eat at night?

If he could stand in front of Miss Mapes's door, and keep his whole breakfast waiting, why couldn't he engage the maid by himself? He couldn't—that was all—simply didn't know how! Had never seen a maid in black satin and an ostrich feather hat investigating one (for that's what "How many in family, ma'am?" came to). In an employment bureau, he would sit remote, like his Buddha on the library mantelpiece, engaging a cook because she "needs a home, Emmy dear."

Why didn't those feet move? She would call him again . . . but the office door opened. Closed. He had gone in to Miss Mapes. "One can't tell even with the best of men." (Madeleine Brazee—bored for a moment—had dropped the tinge of those words into Emmy's colorless mind last week.) "The best of men"—the words, circles spreading. . . .

As the office door let in the Doctor, Miss Mapes's custom-made day (sleeping, eating, working, and all

the rest of it) became unnoticed wheels going round in the hold of her mind. This day that he brought in was a sheet uncaged by words; anything might be written on it. Tonight, perhaps his Idea in black letters for all the world to see. "Good morning, Miss Mapes." She could work straight through the twenty-four hours for a man like that.

And he hadn't known till he saw her how afraid he had been that the office would be empty. No need to ask her if she had slept well; no "left over" in her face. The whole girl so new, so fresh, that one gathered her—always as if he had never seen her before. But official Miss Mapes was handing him a letter from Stanchfield University, Michigan. Was it important? "It came Special Delivery." He saw the blue stamp under her thumb.

Old Fowler's writing—Fowler was head of the place . . . greatest research man in the world . . . lived there in a little house, a long line of hills behind it—trees there, and meadows. Did she like meadows?

Miss Mapes liked meadows. As her nails, stained with acid, left the stamp.

"Dear old Fowler." The Doctor's finger ripped

open the letter. And then: "Good old Fowler—to give me this honor."

For Fowler had taught him everything he knew—his voice roughened. "There never was such a teacher. Fowler had a bird's-eye view of things; made a boy feel all fish's gills, so his students, just for their own sakes, had to evolve into Fowler's medium." Could she imagine that kind of a man?

Fowler resigning from Stanchfield! "I am too old," the man wrote. "Too old!" Another letter like this would never come into his office, he knew it only too well. Would Miss Mapes like him to read her how Fowler asked him, on the part of the Directors, to take his place? "Take his place!"

"'I hesitate,'"—wasn't it like Fowler to say the thing that way?—"hesitate to ask me, a man with 'such a large practice'—as he puts it—to leave New York?" Hoping that the honor of the position, and the chance to work quietly would persuade his best pupil to accept the offer.

"Please go on." She didn't want him to fold the letter. So he opened it out again to read to her; that

Dr. Fowler was leaving a house on the grounds behind, and ten thousand dollars salary a year. "Trust me, the peace of the place is worth losing the extra money for," Dr. Fowler assured Dr. Farraday. Closed, hoping they "would be honored," and so forth and so forth.

"Dear old man . . ." The Doctor folded the letter now.

Stanchfield University! Miss Mapes knew it well. Gnarled pamphlets came from there every week! She saw Dr. Farraday at its head—in a tower, holding up his Idea, a ball of light to the world, clearing a pathway through darkness—saw the little white house, against a line of Michigan hills, meadows too—meadows, with clover or golden rod—couldn't say a thing at this minute— Wasn't it her place just to stand, hands folded, thinking how everything he needed had dropped down to him from the sky?

Her silence beat a drum; his salvation thumped in the office.

"She thinks I can go." She seemed very young to the Doctor, far younger than Agatha—only Joan

of Arc or Mary Ellen could take life as simply as that, he mused as he went down to breakfast.

While she didn't get a whiff of fresh coffee through the door that he opened. Knew Bridget wouldn't make coffee over again. For Bridget had her philosophy—was against generosity; resisted it blindly as a slop-back to feudalism; knew a worker couldn't depend on it.

Generosity—and Miss Mapes let herself stretch out on the little eddy of thought. It took her along so she was sympathizing with Bridget now for a moment, remembering a Paris fiacre where generosity was part of the tariff; saw herself fumbling for a *pourboire*—"*Cochon*" the purest name she heard as she fumbled. Then the eddy stopped at a conclusion. "Generosity can't be coded," she said to herself. (But just the same she wished Bridget would stop making history for a moment, and would give Dr. Farraday a fresh cup of coffee.) Had love failed? she wondered. Like generosity, would it have to go as a code? No floating needed, to see that in family life love wasn't a thing to depend on. It could trellis in and out of a pattern, hiding the angles—a hither-

and-yon thing, its vagrancy part of its charm—but by itself, love couldn't be coded, for some one always got crucified. What was it one had to depend on? . . .

She was still searching—wondering, too, why did a little question matter so much—when Dr. Squires came into the office, a missed look on his face because his machine hadn't caught up with her feet on Fifth Avenue.

Would he please have the blood in the office before five o'clock? Dr. Farraday had left the order.

He got it—any girl over a counter, to any man coming or going, he thought, hearing "six healthy blood specimens and thirty pernicious ones" were wanted—"No, there wasn't blood enough last night." (Her eyes water-tight port-holes, not a single speculation about Dr. Farraday's test was to be admitted.)

She was pretending the old man had his test, was she? Not in a hundred years would he get it. Dr. Squires let her know by a tilt at the corner of his lips that she needn't pretend to *him!* But she didn't notice his smile; a sneer wasn't enough for Miss Mapes—it wasn't! That girl was obtuse, needed

words. She needn't pretend to him, he said, for he had met the old man in the hall just now, who had told him last night's test had decided nothing—not a single thing had the Doctor got!

Miss Mapes saw his sneer widening as he watched the red rage she felt rise in her face. In her eyes now—at the mere thought of Dr. Farraday, confessing a mistake to Dr. Squires. But a minute after: how glorious for him to tell! No false pride in Dr. Farraday; he always made sense with one's afterthoughts.

"Not in a hundred years will Dr. Farraday get it." Dr. Squires was emptying his mind to her now—it made him very sad, to watch a man throwing away a large practice, burning the candle at both ends (Dr. Squires took no risks with his symbols). "Not a chance for the old man," he repeated with funereal lips, his little eyes moving smirkily. He went further; even if the test came out right, she knew very well it would take years to establish, he didn't mind telling her. She must see how improbable success was for such an old man who looked really all in this morning.

"We must take care of him." He put himself on the other side of Dr. Farraday, making him totter between them. That's the way Dr. Squires talked to the patients outside. She was sure of it. The unquackery of Dr. Farraday was an easy mark.

She hated Dr. Squires—he knew it and hated her. Wanted to smash through her eyes (she knew), but just because she was a woman he couldn't let her alone. Was sliding his fingers now in the palm of her hand—five little garter snakes, crawling—they made her unreasonably faint.

Would she dine with him in his little house? They would have birds and champagne. "Birds and champagne, eh?", the "eh" like a nudge. The man was ludicrous, a comic-paper villain—was telling her now about his victrola—"a victrola that plays Hawaiian tunes." The victrola the finishing touch, she supposed. A bird and champagne and a victrola —movie stuff! Next reel would be flashed, a woman wrestling for her honor around a table set with birds and champagne, while the victrola . . .

No, she wouldn't. She didn't dine alone with men —didn't want to, never would—she snapped at him.

Puckered her lips at him, was an old maid to Dr. Squires—an old maid in a bottle sealed over with glass.

"Never?" He was pleading with her now. But she had no pleading scheduled for ten in the morning. "No further orders. Nothing more, Dr. Squires;" but he didn't budge. Would she think it over? he implored, simply barnacling on her time!

"That's all." Her voice put a period.

But it wasn't all, for in the house opposite, Mrs. Brazee was ringing the telephone, as Enid lay on her mother's Du Barry bed under a leopard skin, lay with eyes cornered in her face that was ebbing all to pallor, listening to Mother ask Miss Mapes through the receiver: Would Dr. Squires—not Dr. Farraday, he hadn't time for such small things—but would Dr. Squires please look over Miss Enid Brazee inside and out, there was something wrong with the girl?

"Twelve-thirty o'clock?" Miss Mapes asked, hearing it would do nicely for Mrs. Brazee. . . . So Miss Mapes wrote the message down on a piece of paper and passed it over to Dr. Squires.

If only—wouldn't Miss Mapes please reconsider? . . . Dr. Squires's plea was still reaching her as he took the paper and read: "Miss Enid Brazee has an appointment with Dr. Squires at twelve-thirty today."

Miss Enid Brazee was asking for him now! Why, the Doctor's patients were coming over to him in shoals.

He positively couldn't keep them away—Mrs. Van Peyton, Mrs. Stuyvesant, Mrs. Brazee, his for keeps, now Enid Brazee, heiress, would be at his office at twelve-thirty o'clock. He would be asked to Miss Enid's début, would be so attentive they couldn't help it. He could go anywhere now, anywhere! What had come over him a moment ago, to almost get down on his knees to this woman who worked—a mere secretary! He, who could really pick and choose anywhere—any one. . . .

Would she please be in his office, he was asking Miss Mapes now, at twelve-thirty? His own nurse had been excused because of Miss Agatha's party; he would make it all right with the Doctor.

He spoke as though she were a commodity. "Yes." He could depend on her, if he would ring the bell to the laboratory.

The man had got Enid Brazee as a patient now! Got her through Mrs. Brazee's hips; he had a beauty parlor clientele now, as well as patients who came to have their souls looked after. The appointment had lifted him high above her, something to be thankful for, if he would only stay there. But she hated to see Dr. Farraday's patients warming the pit of Dr. Squires's stomach.

Except for that house against the hills—around it the meadows of Michigan.

CHAPTER XI

THE breakfast glacial. The period was probably in the coffee. His wife about as personal as a railway station. Just why? No answer. Family life grew weedy questions.

"Hello, Penny—good old Penny."

Eating griddle cakes, Penny a son one might be proud of; great commissariat Penny carried to fight the world with.

"Hello, Pater."

"Pater" meant that Penny had debts. Sure of Penny's debts now, for he pulled out one's chair so politely with his awkward hands.

Penny a great animal, brutal as yet, even through a father's eyes much too fat. But he stood firm on his feet. No angel stuff for women around his mouth like Sam Osborne. Penny could be made a fool of, a cherubic fool, by any girl coming along, and he certainly drank himself into a face like the chicken pox.

"How are things, Penny?"

Poor old son, who was keeping his lips shut like

a baby, waiting for his mother to do the talking.

"Penny has told me everything. We'll discuss it after Agatha's début." Emmy came in on her cue.

Twenty-four hours' leeway relaxed Penny, who called, "Another plateful, Nora." If only Emmy wouldn't flutter between a man and his son! One wanted a son to stand up to one, man to man, wanted him motherless and fatherless, an orphan standing out in the open, speaking just for himself.

Wanted to say, "If you have any debts, state them. Let's get rid of them now—make a fresh start." Penny would hear a friend's voice asking him, come out to one with his trouble, not a son but a friend. Nothing that couldn't be cleared away by two friends speaking the truth to each other.

Didn't Emmy see how unneeded a mother's breast was to a boy? Would see fast enough when Penny dropped dollars for his mistakes, had to sweat off a debt. That hunger struggle did away with parents for a man. Going forward left no time to look behind. He and Emmy would be white-capped mountains in the background for Penny, who didn't imagine the bayonet charge that was waiting to stab the baby look out of his face.

"Coffee, please, Emmy. Not strong, but hot."

God, what acrid stuff! Why couldn't Bridget, who got a hundred dollars a month for her cooking, make as good coffee as Miss Mapes, who wasn't a cook, tipped one's tongue, but Emmy's glazing voice said: "Let's hurry through, dear. Tonight is Agatha's début. . . ." She might have announced, "It's Judgment Day, dear," in the same voice—pulverizing everything. So coffee became unimportant.

"Omelette, sir?"

He spooned out the yellow mound laxly, picked up a slippery mushroom on his fork, thought of Miss Mapes's omelettes.

"Miss Mapes makes an omelette that puts the sun up in one's stomach."

"Miss Mapes! An omelette!" It couldn't be possible that Emmy heard John correctly.

"Miss Mapes has nothing to do with my table." She picked up the name with a pair of tongs for John and Penny to see . . . threw it away. . . .

How could John even speak of that woman, when Penny had discovered . . . (Clever Penny—to find out and tell her this morning.) How could John bring a woman like that right into the food?—Nora there,

bursting, one could see, to tell Bridget: "The master thinks you can't make omelettes as well as Miss Mapes." The whole house upset! All for a vile woman's omelette, for didn't servants rest against each other like a house of cards? Have to be handled delicately?

"Food isn't chemistry, dear." She must speak coldly. Nora must see that her mistress stood firmly with Bridget against Miss Mapes. As to Bridget, "she is a wonderful cook, John. She has made twenty-five cakes with separate filling for Agatha's party."

When Emmy spoke about Agatha, a smile widened her voice, the Doctor saw little points of light come into her eyes, knew just how Emmy felt about Agatha, would be an old fossil if he didn't see that Agatha was Emmy's Idea. Emmy shouldn't be curbed about her eldest daughter. Was watching her child sprint, wearing her colors, wanting her to take every hurdle. Emmy had staked everything on Agatha.

"Agatha needs a fan and slippers—oh, endless things for the party tonight."

Those rays from Emmy's eyes reached out and jabbed him. Didn't he know what was expected of

him? He knew very well. Besides, he would like to see Agatha win a nice young man for a prize, who would take the bishop out of her and give her children to manage. Her children would be very well taken care of.

Now that was sweet of John, in spite of Miss Mapes, to take out his wallet, pull out those bank notes, and hand them over the pink coffee pot.

Dr. Farraday saw Emmy put the notes into her black leather bag; swallowed, he thought, as it snapped.

"Hello, Father."

It was Mary Ellen, whose eyes danced in a pair of rimmed glasses, whose teeth were being straightened, who was sending him now a golden smile from the doorway. His Mary Ellen, in whom the Creator's intention had to be constantly modified.

"You can't have a hot breakfast, Mary Ellen, at nine-fifteen." Emmy placated Nora, into whose face Mary Ellen's late arrival brought the look of impeded cattle.

But Mary Ellen didn't mind Nora. Could drink her milk and eat her roll, sitting quite comfortably

on the arm of Father's chair, fishing up his cold omelette bit by bit on his fork. It tasted very good. Why hadn't he eaten it himself?

Penny, stuffed out like a pincushion, certainly had eaten. His plate was all syrupy. "Some day I will have pancakes and pancakes, and not have to say, 'Hello, Penny,' " to a greedy old pig who might have saved some for her, and even now could only say, "Hello," as if it lowered him to speak to his sister. Too grand to articulate, was he? But she had to stay quiet because she might have to make a noise about Agatha's party, and now was the time to ask (Father here—no Agatha—to get hold of Mother and say, "Mary Ellen is a perfect nuisance—put her to bed")—now was the time to say, just between one's self and himself:

"May I come to the party tonight, Father?"

Slanting his eyes, there was the burning bush of her hair caught back with brown ribbon. He hadn't thought of Mary Ellen at parties. A restfulness about the child that could be calculated on. She didn't make the uprushes on his pocketbook that Agatha and Penny did. All in a moment with her head against

his, Mary Ellen as rest and recreation was over. The craving suspense in her voice . . . oncoming parties in it . . . gave him a pang. . . . But of course he was an old fogy, to think that the child would want just to go to concerts and learn poetry for him forever; really an old Dombey of a father—so she felt his nod on her hair.

"I'll learn more poetry for you right after the party—" For there never was such a Father.

He didn't dare look across the coffee pot at Emmy. Family life engendered a heat; really a questionable form of association, for he knew Emmy's eyes without looking in them. Mary Ellen's head was against him, he felt the hot whisper:

"May I have silver slippers and silk stockings, the finest ones, Father?"

"God, you and Agatha cut coupons off Father!" For Penny knew the meaning of whispers, and wasn't going to shut up any longer.

It hurt a man terribly to fall suddenly into mushiness in a son—no hardness in it. Soft of a boy to speak roughly. One couldn't be soft in family life, couldn't risk it—too many snags about.

And he watched Mary Ellen pulling the strings of Nora's apron in passing. A dash of Puck in Mary Ellen; even as he thought about Penny, he had to blow his nose, afraid Emmy might see him smile at antics that hadn't a single excuse.

"Good-by, Mom."

Kissing her Mother good-by, her gold brace caught in Emmy's hair net.

"Be careful—really, that child, John, she's obstreperous."

Mary Ellen waved from the door. Stood there, just hoping Father wouldn't mention the stockings and slippers to Mother.

"Good-by, Father."

From the front hall, Father winked.

"Remember secrets," she called.

"Secrets." The Doctor ratified the contract. No, he wouldn't tell Emmy.

"Isn't it enough that you let her off from school today, let her stay in the house with *that Miss Mapes?* You spoil the child," Emmy said. Easy to see she didn't want any spoiling taken from Agatha.

CHAPTER XII

"You might as well let the morning in, Marie."

Penny saw shades in Enid's house slide up behind lace curtains.

Enid did look pale. Her mother watched the girl come through the door in an apple-green wrapper. Enid had no right to let herself get shopworn—défraichie—as she sat now in the public eye, so to speak, not a morning paper published without her name clothed in something from Paris.

"Look Enid—'Miss Enid Brazee in red velvet assisted her mother last night in a cloth-of-gold gown,' " was in the *Herald,* a morning tonic for a child to see, who was leaning in the flimsiest way against the bed post, after one had told her over and over again to take a nap every afternoon.

"Did you take your nap yesterday, Enid?" Did she realize that she must get strong and well for her début? What was the matter with her? If her trouble was any feeling for that silly cub, Penny Farraday, she was to dismiss it at once. "At once—do you hear me, Enid?" He wasn't worth her attention ex-

cept as an accelerator for other men who hung around at parties. Must realize she was to marry a title. Didn't she know how hard her mother had worked to keep her uninvolved—a *jeune fille* in every sense of the word, never alone anywhere, except for that visit to Agatha—so she would be free for a marriage of convenience—the very best kind.

Well, then, if it wasn't Penny that was bothering her, would she please stop collapsing and sit on the bed, while her mother informed her that a début in New York was no boy-and-girl dance in a barn. It was an across-the-footlights affair, and it had to be staged.

She was to be the center of a great pageant. "You must remember that, Enid." Not one single night could she stay at home! She was to keep being seen —"Constantly seen, Enid"—that was the main thing. For if a girl disappeared for a moment, the gap she left was filled at once. She must make herself watched for every night. Conglomerate partners were just one swollen man—habit was the thing that got them.

Then she would have to be featured every evening

in a new dress that would quiver the stag line. Every morning, eating breakfast in bed, "There you will be, Enid, in print just as you are today in the *Herald*."

And now that Enid knew she was part of a pageant, why didn't she fly a banner in her face? her mother wanted to know. "Look a little eager." For how could a mother feature any one so toneless, slumping down at the foot of the bed?

Slumping at the foot of the bed, Enid thought how right Agatha was, how everything that happened to a girl was a mother's fault. Mother had kept her a *jeune fille*, as she called it, and now she was a *jeune fille* who couldn't open her mouth to her mother—a stage mother in a stage bed (her Du Barry bed; only it wasn't Du Barry any more than her Catherine-of-Russia topaz was Catherine of Russia). It might be or it might not, just the way it struck Mother. Enid didn't feel like a daughter at all to this mother, who was leaning against the pillows opposite in her gold bed jacket, a leopard skin that she had picked off the desert to match her hair with its metal waves thrown across her feet. It was

easier to talk to Agatha's mother in flannel—who was a real mother—would never have flowers from Wyrzinsky on her night table.

Enid knew the white roses were from Wyrzinsky, for young boys always sent Mother white roses, and that red camelia was old Sir Eric again. If Wyrzinsky were to come in and see Mother now, he might look across at her daughter instead, for his roses made Mother's skin look like leather, and little wrinkles were scribbled all over her face and unless she held her chin way out one could see her neck was beginning to shir.

Silly of Mother to carry on with young boys at her age; she ought to keep collecting octogenarians like Sir Eric, to whom she must seem quite a young girl.

Across the bed now, she was somebody else's mother in another country—far off, like one's furniture, like Marguerite and Marie. All far away, no concern of Enid's—all of them rubbed out by the letter from Larry Cammack that hadn't come, that never would come now that he was giving a dinner at Sherry's to the cold wife whom he hated. . . .

Far, far away, a metal mother was saying: "Really, Enid, coming out will be so easy for you. The scenery is set; all you have to do is to walk into the spotlight. Don't look so pale, child. The spotlight is waiting for you, so you will have no trouble at all. Here, smell these smelling salts. Sit up and listen to me."

And Enid did listen to the big dance that was to be given for Miss Enid Brazee, Jim Brazee's daughter, and a great heiress. It was not to be like Agatha's dance—"not a homemade affair at all." A real dance, Enid, with magnificent favors, all Wiley's orchestra playing and champagne flowing, and special cars engaged to gather boys from Princeton and Yale, who would come in armies to see her standing beside her mother in some wonderful dress—"something piquant, on the edge of bizarre."

She was handing Enid now what she called the "Boy Book," "secured with infinite trouble," in which every boy in New York who had any pretensions at all was carefully listed. "Dear Enid" had only to take the book to her room to see that there were five hundred dancing boys in New York

alone, all waiting to see her come out—"five hundred, only imagine it, Enid!" Would she please make a mark here and there with her pencil, so her mother could see which boys she preferred for dinner?

Enid did take the pencil, and mark a name here and there. But how could one choose boys when the only name one wanted, or ever would want to see, was Larry Cammack? And how could she be "piquant on the edge of bizarre," whatever the words meant—only they didn't mean anything—when she had signed her letter to him, "Your anxious little Kiki"? And he hadn't answered her, nor ever would now.

Even if he thought her letter was silly, he must know that except for him she was all alone. His secret self and her secret self—alone in the midst of all these parties that Mother was talking about, where a girl couldn't have one single night in which she could hide.

She was tired, got confused, couldn't follow Mother, who was buzzing and buzzing; couldn't follow over months and months to a dinner in the

spring, where the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden were to dine right here in this house.

"With me, your mother—in emeralds like pears." (For in the spring it would be just like Jim to give her back her emeralds.) "And you, Enid, in white satin and crystals."

The table was as good as set now, Mother said. She was to sit at that table then, all dressed up, when that letter that hadn't come would be an old story—only worse as it got older, worse every day. For Larry Cammack would be quite an old man then; would have lived nearly a year with a woman he hated.

Those months and months had to come—nothing could stop them. She could see them, as she listened, pressing nearer and nearer to an Enid in orange and red, in white satin and crystal, in a different dress every night—"piquant, on the edge of bizarre" hadn't Mother said? An Enid who was dancing and dancing in the center of Mother's great pageant.

"All you have to do is to walk into it," glared a great label over the show. All she had to do then was to dance in the spotlight, while the "Boy Book"

and Agatha and Crown Princes and Princesses looked on—all of them laughing and jeering at her. Larry Cammack looking on too, with his wife, pointing out "his anxious little Kiki" as if he were showing the best joke in the world. All the audience shaking with laughter now, all except Mother, who said with tones as hard as her hair, "You are going to marry a coronet in the spring—Agatha can never hope for that." And there was Mother coming nearer holding a coronet.

But Mother was going to be very angry when she saw the people laughing and jeering; one couldn't bear to think how her eyes would look. There would be nobody to help. . . . Those eyes of Mother's. . . . Take them away. . . . Too much to bear. . . .

"Let me go," Enid called, feeling the bed let down, down and away, like an elevator. . . .

But why was Marie crying, "*Pauvre petite, pa—a-a-le,*" drawing out the word as if she enjoyed it, while she wiped Mademoiselle's face with perfume?

"There is nothing the matter, nothing at all," Enid said, remembering that Mother couldn't help, on account of her pageant which she had already

arranged; so there was no room to change anything.

But what was Mother saying?

"Don't be upset, Enid, I'll get you all right in a jiffy—you won't miss one single ball." And she held up the receiver, calling: "Hello, Miss Mapes—I want Dr. Squires to examine Enid inside and out."

One had to put a hand over one's mouth to prevent screaming out.

"You're as good as cured!" And Mother put down the receiver. "Dr. Squires won't let a thing slip, not a thing—"

But how could she throw her own daughter overboard, saying so sweetly: "You're cured," putting the terror of Dr. Squires all around her? He was like a bad dream, chasing her faster and faster, gaining on her every minute, so that there was nothing to do but to hide anywhere now, to pretend anything, smiling always at Mother. She must get away quickly from Dr. Squires. "Think, think, Enid Brazee, how to give Dr. Squires the slip—he's so close to you now. Not more than two hours." She could go to the park—could lose herself there—stop her watch. . . .

Of course she would go to Dr. Squires at half-past

twelve o'clock, Enid said to her mother, squeezing out another smile, hoping she could make the door handle before her legs folded up under her.

Afterwards, as she sat on her bed, that story in school where a man was locked in a room with the walls that grew closer and closer together came back to her. The class had shivered as he was crushed slowly to death. She, Enid, was that man, for there wasn't any way she could get out.

Where was Larry? But no, even if she found him, called him up—his wife might answer her. She couldn't bear that, couldn't bear another woman between herself and Larry.

There was no one to help her but Agatha, then. "If you're troubled about anything, don't tell me—just let me help you," she had said so many times lately. (One didn't have to tell her, then, did one, if she just wanted to help? For one had to speak to some one—couldn't sit, feet dangling over the bed, one had to do something.)

"Hello, Agatha," Enid quavered into the telephone.

"Hello, Enid."

Agatha sounded so everyday over the receiver! If she could only have been unhappy too—a little—over the Prince, perhaps; Enid wanted her that way. But Agatha was having breakfast in bed. Her dress had come home—it was hand-embroidered-with-brilliants—she was crazy about it. Every one was in New York for her party; Penny was here at breakfast downstairs, Sammy Osborne had sent American beauties, and the Prince was coming. She had something to tell Enid about the Prince, had decided that Princes were perfectly lovely.

The day seemed to be going right ahead for Agatha, who sounded terribly happy—the Prince and everything.

Did Enid want anything?

No, Enid didn't want anything except to call up . . . "Only . . ."

But that "only" was what Agatha had been waiting for, ever since she had watched Enid sift the mail, and then with a face that looked as if some one had knocked it silly, throw unopened envelopes back on the hall table. Because of Enid's face over the letters, Agatha had written Penny: "It's just

about time for you to come along." Now that "only" would get him across the street.

"Only what, Enid? What troubles you?"

"It's that Larry Cammack," Mary Ellen answered obligingly from the foot of Agatha's bed. For Agatha needn't think that she, Mary Ellen, didn't know that Enid was crazy about Larry. Words couldn't express what Mary Ellen thought of Enid. She was just nothing at all, dying on the telephone over Larry, who said over and over again in the summer: "How's lovely Miss Mary Ellen?"—smiling that sly smile, while he waited for an answer which she wanted to make a slap in the face.

Agatha said, "Get out, Mary Ellen," clamping the receiver close to her ear, so her sister wouldn't hear Enid burst into tears, or the words quavering out: "No letter . . . especially today, after I've written . . . so frightened . . . couldn't you help me? . . ."

"Chase yourself, Mary Ellen. It's a shame for Father to let you stay home from school today."

"I'm coming to your party tonight—Father said so"—Mary Ellen knew it gave Agatha a pain to

think of her dancing and dancing tonight, so she put her head through the door once again to say that Father would be downstairs tonight, and Agatha needn't think she was going to get off any of her "Go-to-bed-chick-a-biddie" stuff with Father around. That settled Agatha for a moment!

For Mary Ellen and Father were friends. Didn't they both adore poetry—weren't they two people tied together by Keats and Shelley? And Father's own words that he said at Bach's concert—"Accuracy is ecstasy"—one remembered it forever. Even if Father's words were strangers at first, if she held on to them, in the night, or any time, they might come and make friends with her.

Why didn't Agatha and Enid look at Father, to see what a man ought to be? When Hamlet said at the theater last night: "He was a man—" she tried the words—a Cinderella-slipper phrase—on Penny, on Sammy Osborne, but not a man she thought of could get his toes in. "I shall not see his like again," just fitted Father.

In her own room she could hear Agatha saying: "If he hasn't written, Enid—don't cry, there are lots

of things to do, even if he has gone back to his wife." And Enid must have just gone to pieces over the telephone, because Agatha said: "Pull yourself together—I'll help you"—and then something so silly that it made one laugh. "Why don't you see Penny, Enid? He is here now."

She was offering old blunderbuss Penny, whom Enid hated! How could Penny help any one? Why, Father even had to help Penny.

"But I don't want to see Penny at ten." Across the street Enid was crying into the telephone, hearing Agatha ask quite severely: "Didn't I help you this summer?" If Enid would think things over—Larry Cammack not writing and going back to his wife and everything else—she would see that help was the thing she needed most. "Just help, that's all, Enid." If she could trust Agatha's judgment, and see Penny for a moment, he might be very useful. "More useful than you could imagine!" Couldn't Enid get it through her head that Agatha only wanted to help more and more?

That was why, when Penny called up at half-past

nine, from the corner drug store because he wanted to talk alone to "dear little Enid" and ask her to see him at ten, Enid said, all right, she would be in. For Agatha gave her the feeling that one must get it through one's head to do just as she said, if one wanted her to help "more and more."

Would Marguerite get out her yellow dress, please, and plenty of perfume and powder?

Marguerite was only too ready to dress her up. "And a little rouge, please, and patent-leather slippers with buckles," for she was going downstairs to see Mr. Farraday at ten. Marguerite was to leave her coat and hat ready in case she might want them, and on no account was she to mention the young man downstairs to Mrs. Brazee; at which order, Marguerite, a finger on her lips, was a conspirator on a stage.

"The young man who sent Mademoiselle the flowers?" Marguerite, scenting a romance with Penny, made one perfectly sick.

CHAPTER XIII

"WHAT did you mean by 'that Miss Mapes'?"

Emmy had a way of saying things; especially when a party loomed. A husband could dismiss most of them as "superfluous ash," but he couldn't dismiss that Miss Mapes phrase, pointing like a finger at the girl.

But Emmy swatted him out of the dining room with: "Things to be put away for the moving vans, John." An air of having so much to do that she couldn't answer questions. So he moved like chaff before a tempest. For wasn't it entirely conceivable if he didn't that Emmy would put him in storage over the début?

"What is that letter you are holding, John, with the Special Delivery stamp?" Emmy's hand stretched out across the newel post. She knew for certain he was taking it up to Miss Mapes.

Of course, he handed her the letter, pranced a little, no doubt, he thought afterwards, to see it in her fingers. (For, say anything you like, wasn't Fowler the greatest research man in the world?)

"Fowler has changed the whole course of metabolism." Of course he didn't expect Emmy to know the thing technically, but didn't it please her that her husband had been chosen to take Dr. Fowler's place, at the head of Stanchfield University, Michigan? Did she mind the laboratory in the backyard so much now she knew it brought a letter like this into a man's life?

She might see that there was an intellectual laying on of hands in science, might understand it because of her father the Bishop. Feeling a little faint, leaning there he had thought, he explained, that perhaps the house and the hills—the peace of it all —might tempt her, so that they could regret it together. "My wife and I regret together"—he would like to write her name with his on the answer.

But that was before he took ten grains of aspirin. Knew afterwards he couldn't have been such a rag on a newel post, talking to Emmy, if he hadn't felt perfectly rotten.

"Ten thousand dollars a year in Michigan"—and splotches came out red stains on her cheeks as she read that Dr. Fowler was robbing her. For could

an honest man propose such a thing? Steal a royal marriage from Agatha, take the house from under them, try to bamboozle John to work for a pittance.

"Why, ten thousand dollars wouldn't pay for Agatha's début!"

In that one sentence, Emmy cored the letter. Not another thing left for her to notice, he could see. Why wasn't John as angry as she at Dr. Fowler? she asked him. John, standing there without saying a word, not grasping the threat at all. "You don't see things, John." She called Penny downstairs to read Father's "wonderful offer" from Stanchfield University.

Standing with his arms around his own mother, Penny read the letter through, and her boy spoke just as she wanted him to.

"Dr. Fowler thought he could get Father for nothing, did he?" Father, who was one of the greatest doctors in the whole city. "Well, the nerve of the old man"—that's what Penny couldn't get over—the nerve! Just for two cents he'd give him a sock in the jaw for thinking of Father in terms of ten thousand.

"It all comes of being shut up with Miss Mapes in the laboratory," the Doctor heard Emmy say; saw her put her hand over Penny's. "If it weren't for 'that woman,' you wouldn't consider it. You are deteriorating, John, to even show me that letter—deteriorating with Miss Mapes."

Curious, Emmy's freedom of speech. Biting words that browsed on a man, were a wife's words.

"Letter, Penny." Nothing more to say to a Penny defending his mother. Nothing to say to Emmy. A husband didn't bite with words, he moved darkly, made mole protests in caverned places, against a wife's liberties. Emmy didn't know he was a split personality at this minute, ostensibly progressing upstairs, a patriarch Father, all family bosom, but inside, a little boy ten years old, hurt in deep places because Emmy wouldn't share a regret with him. "Boo-hoo"—that's all a man was. College degrees, research doctor, and more honors to come was the way he thought of himself. But let his womankind so much as raise a finger—"boo-hoo," a little boy in a cellar was all that he was.

John's office door closed against her now; "Your Father is perfectly callous about his family, Penny." For wasn't he? to shut himself up in an office with that woman who had been—one didn't even use the word . . . "unfortunate" was what she had heard it called at Papa's. For all she knew, Miss Mapes might be kissing him now against his wishes; hadn't she fed him in secret? Those women had wiles—that was the word. A son ought to go into that office now, fling the door open, say: "You've no right to close a great door like that in Mother's face so she can't speak to you," she told Penny—who wished to God he hadn't let her into the joke about Miss Mapes.

"Just dismiss the woman, Mother." It was simple, wasn't it, to send her out without any reference? Hadn't thought of Mother going on like a silly girl, all fussed up about Father, who was too old to be making love to any one, if that was what troubled her. Couldn't two old people stop bothering a young man? Get some sense in their heads? What more was there to say now that he had put Father right about that letter?

"Forget it, Mother, forget it." And he went out to telephone Enid Brazee at the corner drug store, where Mary Ellen couldn't by any chance hear him asking: "Might I please call at ten?"

Behind the panels at which Emmy gazed—but not for long, because Martha called to her to know what towels she wanted laid out for the evening—would Miss Mapes take his temperature, please? the Doctor was saying. He had to get through today, simply had to. Would rest tomorrow. "Really, Miss Mapes, I promise." Even if his fever was over a hundred and one, it was nothing at all—a laborer wouldn't even notice it. If she'd get him more aspirin, please, this check was for Mary Ellen. "Shoes and silk stockings, the finest ones, Father." He would give her sixty dollars to buy a dress for the party; wouldn't stop at feet, wanted to wave a wand all across Mary Ellen.

It didn't need a special person who cared like herself to see how he felt. For the lines in his face were like sepia strokes and just the way his hands fumbled for the glass of water showed he was put

out of gear by the fever. "Rest tomorrow"—it was comic, that's what that was to Miss Mapes. But one had to take him so. A man without any tomorrow to rest in.

"Here is the list." Calls were timed for this morning. Patients would be here at two o'clock today on account of the moving van at twelve. He could put his test in the incubator at five, could make six or eight more calls afterwards. At eight they would look at the experiment in the laboratory. When the whole day was over, she would be waiting on the steps to assist him. "You'll find me there, Doctor." Afterwards, he might lie down, so as to rest before Miss Agatha's party, unless some one called him up—which they probably would, because his patients usually began to die as soon as he lay down on a sofa. Did he see she had marked "soup at one" on the list? There wasn't to be any lunch at home, but would he please remember that she had planned his last visit near the Plaza Hotel, where he could go in and order soup?

But he might be very ill at one! Bed, hot-water bags, care for him this very minute, necessitousness

swept over her—only wasn't she paid to emerge out of feelings? A girl who might work with him, laugh with him, but not argue with him as if she were part of his life? A girl who— Would she please be so kind as to take down an answer to a letter? he asked her, for there was a matter he wished disposed of and posted right away. (He spoke as though the matter might bite him.)

"Dear Dr. Fowler:" The first plunge was the worst part of the matter for him—fingering his mail, he turned up an insurance bill under the rubber strap—that too would need answering.

"Dear Dr. Fowler:" (Miss Mapes put down the words. Across the inkpot, saw his face acquiescent. Something pinched at her throat.) "I can't tell you how touched I am at the honor you do me." Then she knew so well what she was in for she could have gone on by herself. "A quiet spot in which to work out my ideas is 'green pastures' to me." That sentence down, she was pen-poised for the "but" that would follow in a minute, she knew, to lop off the "green pastures."

This morning, hills and meadows and a house in

Stanchfield had fluttered to him out of the mail. She had settled him there, seen the sun flooding through the windows. (He wouldn't be able to get away from the sun in that house; sun in his laboratory too.) The test tubes would move West. If they hustled, and began their march next week, before they got under way to the street, the whole Farraday house, thirty feet wide and finished in periods, would collapse, leaving Nora and Bridget and Martha behind, and Agatha too who wouldn't be able to squeeze into a house in Michigan on ten thousand a year. Miss Mapes was ready to start marching, only for that coming "but."

"But—"

It popped out of its sentry box on the edge of the doctor's escape.

"But I have a wife and family so thoroughly urbanized," he dictated. . . .

"A wife and family"—Miss Mapes put his doom down herself. At his own command she wrote reason off the map. It was too much. What was expected of a girl anyway? If he sent her away she would

have to speak out her mind. She couldn't be a secretary a moment longer; just couldn't bear . . .

Would he mind—she was feeling more timid than five years ago, for this thing mattered so terribly—would he mind if she told him he was ill, so ill that he didn't know perhaps that he was refusing Dr. Fowler, who was the greatest research man in the world. If he would just please ask Mrs. Farraday before saying "no"; he had only to read his wife the letter. She wouldn't let him pass it by. Hadn't Mrs. Fowler accepted it? Well, hadn't she? "And count my salary out." For she budgeted herself in a second at twenty dollars a month—one didn't need clothes in the country. She'd cook for them there, she'd help Mrs. Farraday; make omelettes and omelettes for them; count it an honor. Moreover, didn't he see that his Idea would get right into line, because of the peace of the place—would start round the world in no time?

Her face changed with every word she spoke. To the doctor all of life was a Benda mask, stiff and changeless behind Miss Mapes's face.

Miss Agatha would help. Could stay at Miss

Brazee's perhaps—she was sure of Agatha! And wasn't Mr. Penny to work in the spring? Mary Ellen would do anything; he had only to watch how she would do anything.

She showed him his family, all malleable for his sake. They ran like jelly into the house in Michigan. She even put Emmy there, her arms lifting something, making shadows on the kitchen floor. "For it's just a question of Mrs. Farraday's seeing things."

"Just a question of seeing"—(Leaning against her boy, Emmy had looked at him with eyes defending her young.) She had put her hand over Penny's; she couldn't have said "sock away" any plainer. He knew those eyes of Emmy's . . . family regulators . . . had to be watched carefully for stops.

"I have to refuse." He spoke curtly; meant to. When one decapitated one's self, wasn't the sooner the better? It was finished.

Finished except that Miss Mapes would have gone with him! She had dropped that oasis into his life. Would have walked over stones, feet bleeding, to get there with him, he knew that. Wouldn't have seen anything but the house on the grounds all the way.

For a moment, her hand was turning the knob. He went in with her. Stayed under the roof alone with her, for no one but she had followed him there. Saw her in white linen, framed by a window against the hills. In the evening, later, her arms would make beautiful shadows on a kitchen floor as his mother's used to do reaching up for a lamp before she blew it out, and one went upstairs to lie warm in bed hearing twigs snap outside, at peace just for a moment —before he finished the letter to Fowler. . . .

"Where was I?" he said sharply, turning his back on the house.

"A wife and family so thoroughly urbanized," she reminded him. So he went on to tell Dr. Fowler that it wouldn't be fair to take them away from their friends and pleasures.

The opportunity was ended now, once and for all, he told her sternly, as "with deep regret and deep gratitude" he was Fowler's "affectionate friend, John Farraday." Neatly done! He watched his head roll into a basket, while an executioner said from somewhere: "The children must have the best of everything."

He was dictating to her as if she were just his secretary, as if what she had said was officious. Perhaps he hadn't meant to take her there at all! Shame welled up in her, for he had spoken that ending as if she were part of the thing that might bite him. . . .

Would Miss Mapes see that the letter was posted? And the Doctor watched her put his medicine into his bag.

"You won't forget to take two every three hours, Dr. Farraday?" He saw her dress so frosty, a man's eye could ski up easily to the dark wing of her hair. It gave her an air of imminent flight—he hoped she would never leave him. She couldn't be much older than Agatha. Would Emmy mind if he sent her some flowers? She must have gone to so very few parties —and he had kept her up till midnight last night! "You must go home early and rest for the dance, Miss Mapes."

She wasn't going to the dance—didn't like parties. Was vehement about the way she hated parties. She really preferred to wait in the laboratory in case he

might want her. Told him he would find her there quite late in the evening.

"Not like parties?" Curious the difference in girls —Now Agatha . . . It put a peace at the end of the day to think of Miss Mapes waiting downstairs, as she handed him now his hat and coat, and his muffler. Would he wrap it tight around his neck? He was to please not catch cold—and his gloves; she had mended the thick leather thumb.

"Don't forget your soup," she called downstairs. To remind him, she came out of the office. Her hands were on one end of the railing, his hand at the other —the banister an elastic band, pulling. . . .

"Dear Dr. Fowler:"—Miss Mapes clicked out on the typewriter, each click a nail boxing up Stanchfield tighter and tighter. Curious, how life fooled one over and over. In school, galley slaves were taught as cast-off barbarisms; Prometheus, a myth on a rock. Then civilization did them up in a coat and muffler, in stone houses, in limousines. Here they were—smuggled back into today. . . . Were the

Doctor's family blind? As she put a red stamp, then a blue one for hurry, on a white envelope, she saw the Farradays—catapulting head over heels over a waterfall, going onto the rocks, snatching Paris hats all the way down, while she wanted to cut herself in pieces for Dr. Farraday. She would! But wasn't it always the wrong person who cut himself in pieces?

So she clipped the letter from Dr. Fowler, and Dr. Farraday's answer together. Would show them once more to the Doctor perhaps; Mrs. Farraday might soften and look at them—perhaps. Things did happen. . . .

Then, if she had to, tonight on her way home she would slot Stanchfield, Michigan, into a New York post box.

So she buttoned the letter and its answer into her linen pocket—that pocket the only place where anything could be safe from the moving vans that were coming at twelve to clear the place for Agatha's party.

CHAPTER XIV

Mrs. Farraday stopped counting towels with Martha in the linen closet, for Miss Mapes was reminding John about soup loudly—brazenly. "Not longer than today, oh, Lord, forever and forever. Amen."

Martha's eyes on Madam saw that old ladies and old servants were done for all the same—life, just as you find it all over. The old lady was saying furiously "One towel is missing out of my marriage set." "Holy Moses, what a fuss a rich woman made over a towel!"

"I'll never give up the search, never." Mrs. Farraday was most particular about her linen and silver—marriage was more than fussing over a man. She spoke from the top of the stepladder, piling whiskey bottles for tonight's punch in Martha's fat arms. A patient had sent them; "Put them in the pantry cupboard. Six at a time, be very careful." If John asked for a drink? Well, he couldn't. It was Agatha who mattered tonight.

"Mary Ellen." Mrs. Farraday called upstairs to

that child, she mustn't go out without bringing back pins, powder and perfume and scented soap, was not to leave the package anywhere. Was just to say, "Agatha's party, Agatha's party," all the time she was out—that would keep her remembering.

"All right, Mother," Mary Ellen answered from her room that was a dump heap—all the old family horrors moved into it. Father's encyclopedia under the bed, his old alarm clock on Mother's pink corduroy wrapper. Unsensitive too to put rubbers right on the mantelpiece! Outside Agatha was yelling over the banister: "The girls are bringing sixty extra men—we'll have the peppiest stag line, Mother. Be sure to have enough pep in the punch."

Sixty men extra! Mrs. Farraday did the sum on her fingers—on account of the stag line, Martha was to take three bottles of Bacardy rum, that had turned up under a bedspread, downstairs.

"I'll be back in an hour to help." Mary Ellen went down from her room towards her yellow dress that hung in a window round a corner (how did Father know she was just dying for it?), down to her gold slippers that would dance round "the peppiest stag

line," followed by black patent-leather pumps—Sammy Osborne's—the Prince—what did it matter so long as she went faster and faster like the pictures of the rape of the Sabines in her Roman history book. Before the Sabine women were carried off in such style, had they pursued their men for weeks and weeks as Mother and Agatha had got after the stag line? Were all lovely parties dreadful underneath? For even now, answers all in and the caterers coming, Mother and Agatha were both scared to death—"Suppose the boys went over to another party at Sherry's."

"Let the boys have plenty of booze—lemonade won't hold them ten minutes," Penny said. Perfectly rotten idea! Men who didn't know one tune from another, whom she could beat to pieces over a tennis net, giving her the lookover at a party! "Man has a fictitious value in the ballroom," Father said, and didn't a perfect bounder look like an angel to a girl when he rescued her from being stuck at a dance? . . . But just tonight the music was going to be divine! All Wiley's orchestra packed into Dr. Squires's office; an extra drum and a saxophone for

fear Mrs. Brazee would get better music for Enid—She would dance and dance tonight. For . . . when she was grown up there would be a place where men would implore her to dance—just a victrola playing maybe; would make love to her, Princes too would kneel at her feet without receiving a penny. Agatha—nothing! She'd rather be Bridget with false teeth saying: "I can't say now if I'll have you or not," to the iceman, than Agatha buying Blavadsky. And even when bought, Agatha's Prince was a perfect slug over the telephone; hadn't answered a ring all the morning.

From the linen closet, "Don't step in any room on this floor, it's all finished," Mother called out.

And Mother's and Father's room was perfectly beautiful, like the royal suite at hotels. No place to lie down anywhere. Two beds were like visiting cards waiting to be stamped, "Dr. and Mrs. Farraday at home tonight." The library was too "Georgian" for anything; every bit of wood polished, a full set of Wordsworth right under the lamp. Company manners all over the house at ten in the morning!

Still going on toward her dress and slippers, Mary

Ellen shut the front door after her. Outside, across the street ringing Enid's bell, there was Penny! Very swanky, in no mood to hear: "Hello, Romeo," from a sister crossing towards him.

In bed through her window, Agatha watched Penny going up Enid's steps. The Brazee door closed after him. It was all plain sailing now; if Penny wasn't the donkey he usually was, he would get just what he wanted. He would have to be very much on her side for the Prince against Father after this; had she played his game at Nantucket? Watch how things were going!

And she wished she could see beauty-parlor secrets through the lace curtains of Mrs. Brazee's window opposite. For no woman turned out that way by herself.

Behind the curtains, Madeleine Brazee was putting herself through what Jim called "mysterious processes." "Cream rub, Marie, a massage and a facial; the hair woman coming at twelve." (She must look beautiful, dismissing Wyrzinsky.) Where? Somewhere, anywhere, where people went when they

weren't needed, she supposed. She would say "good-by" very sweetly to Wyrzinsky because she had hurt him. . . .

If the curtains of the floor below were only penetrable, Agatha would have seen Penny on a Louis XIV chair, wagging inside, like a pet dog, to Enid, who was coming into the room smelling expensively of perfume, with one of Penny's roses pinned in her dress.

If Enid had been thinking of any one but herself, Agatha would have known the game was up because of that eternal wagging. Why couldn't he give Enid a Blavadsky look—as if she were "canaille, canaille that encumbered?" Why couldn't Penny build barriers. She knew by the Prince a girl liked to jump little barriers. Fortunate there were curtains, for she would have despised him, cringing —a boardwalk to Enid—a "just step on me" to Enid.

"Hello, Enid," Penny was saying, who was a bulge in a chair, something upholstered and soft—no pageant about Penny. His hand padded hers—and she did wish he would hold on to her because of the

way she felt about windows: holes in the side of the house, out of which she could hide if Mother's pageant came after her.

"Hello, Penny."

For she couldn't stand all day with her hand in his. Must sit straight in the chair opposite him, act as if nothing had happened, wondering did Agatha suspect anything. What had she told Penny about "helping?"—did he know? . . . all of a sudden she was afraid.

"Nice of you to come to help—" Did he see her teeth hitting together?

He saw she might cry any minute. Enid always busy despising him before, just a baby—feeling terribly about something, crying now.

"Is it Larry Cammack that troubles you?"

The question burst out of him—a bobbed head all he could see of her now, her face hidden in a handkerchief. Was it "that rotter" she was crying for? "Well, is it, or not?" She must answer right away, for after a girl told a man she wanted to see him at ten in the morning most dreadfully, he wasn't going to be made a fool of again.

How could she tell him? She had never thought that Penny could look as if he would knock any one down as he roared at her: "Is it Larry Cammack?"

"No—" she swallowed—her voice mustn't break. No, she wasn't crying about Larry. Something terribly worse she was crying about, but she could never tell Penny.

Didn't he know that she couldn't care about a man who had a wife and two children? And now that he knew that she had never even thought of Larry for weeks, now that he knew, would he please go over to his chair and sit down, and not shake her arm so, saying, "Who in hell is it, then?" as if he really had a right to know. "Who is it?" For a girl didn't cry for nothing.

Penny was right; a girl didn't cry for nothing. But what could she say as long as she couldn't tell the truth? Couldn't think of anything to say, for of course Penny knew that a girl didn't cry that way for her mother who had only been talking of parties and a coronet. "A coronet in the spring!"— It came to her now to save her from stammering there forever at Penny. The coronet in the spring was what

she was crying about, she told him. It made her cry this way often. Mother had just told her again of an old Duke Something-or-Other, that Father had picked out for her; the contract was drawn—that was it—a contract—it was settled; she couldn't get out of marrying him now no matter how much she tried. She couldn't bear it; she hated the thought (she found herself crying now on Penny's shoulder). The duke was old, just as Agatha said he would be. Would keep her shut up in his castle that was a prison, while he went off making love to other women, as all foreigners did.

A new Enid this, limp, crying into his coat. Why, he could do anything for this girl who was saying that she'd sent for him to help her, that he'd simply have to! Wouldn't he hide her, perhaps in Canada, in a shop or something—anywhere . . . she'd go anywhere that he told her, clinging to him now, if he'd just hide her away from the old duke. "Please hide me, Penny."

Penny was patting her. "Poor little baby." Didn't seem to think it queer of her to be wanting to hide. Told her she had done jolly well to send

for him; he was just the person to help her; this matter of hiding was a thing for him to look out for. "Just your business and mine." Had she ever thought of the very best way to get rid of everybody? Well, he had been thinking of it ever since he had known her. She must see it herself now. "Marry me next week—next week at the latest" was the only way to drop a brick on the old geezer. They could keep it secret, if she wanted—and what could an old donkey say about marriage when she could tell him she had been Mrs. Archibald Pennington Farraday for months?

"Tableau!" Penny said, his hands out, showing how that news would squash any duke.

Penny never imagined that Enid could cling so close to him, asking "What time is it?" And what was there in "half-past ten" to make her hold even tighter than before? Why, she really loved him! A fool he had been to be jealous of Larry Cammack.

It wasn't parties or the duke that made her hold on to Penny. "Dr. Squires at twelve-thirty" put her back again in a panic. In an hour and a half he was to look at her "inside and out," Mother said. So

what was she to say to Penny—to get rid of Dr. Squires—except that she couldn't bear waiting until next week, just couldn't bear it! Knew something would separate them if she waited—with a father and mother so dead set against Penny.

It didn't seem possible that Enid loved him so, that she couldn't wait a week. Couldn't believe his luck, to be hearing that now she had found him she couldn't bear to lose him, would kill herself right out of that window if he were taken away.

Would she marry him today, right away—get the whole thing fixed—bury and cremate an old duke? Would she? Anything seemed possible with an Enid who held on to him like a vise now, supposing she must marry him if he wouldn't let her off, and because he just insisted she would give in, would go down to a Justice of the Peace where he said that Sammy had told him that any one could get tied right away.

"Now, this minute?"

"Now." Of course she was ready—of course. . . . Penny told her she mustn't turn pale. A blushing bride was what a fellow wanted. If she put on her

hat and coat they would go off in a taxi, only he remembered he hadn't a cent in his pocket. Would have to run across the street where he'd left his purse in the hall.

But Enid wouldn't let him leave her. What did money matter, now? Here were twenty dollars out of her beaded purse, her hat and coat were upstairs. "Hurry out to the corner drug store, Penny." In five minutes they could meet at the ice-cream counter.

"Hurry!" He was not to kiss her—"not like that now." For she didn't want to think of Larry Cammack. He was the only thing she mustn't think of now.

"Of course I love you, Penny. Or why should I ask you to hurry?"

"Come upstairs, Mother!" Agatha screamed sitting up stiff in her bed. For Penny was running down the Brazee steps; Penny was up to something—"He has that kind of a walk."

Mrs. Farraday almost fell off the step-ladder, dusting a print of George Washington crossing the Delaware that hung in the hall.

"Handsome boy!" She watched her son through the window across Agatha.

"Handsome! Penny's a pudge." But did Mother see Enid following Penny? Watch the way Penny owned the earth every step.

"They're engaged if I know anything at all."

Mrs. Farraday sat down on the bed. Penny's broken heart at Nantucket was one thing, but "engaged" took her strength all out of her. Penny was her baby, and money wasn't everything.

"She isn't good enough for my boy."

But didn't Mother see how Penny's engagement was going to fix the Prince? There was every reason to think that Penny and Enid would be married very soon—"every reason, Mother"—and didn't Mother see that with Penny off their hands and the laboratory closed—"and that will be easy, now that we know about Miss Mapes"—Father could settle ten thousand dollars on herself and the Prince right away. Mary Ellen could be put at some musical school for a great many years—in Germany one got the most for one's money. Mother and Father might even like to move to a little apartment after that, to

make it still easier; without parties there wasn't really much point to a big house like this.

They would have to work very fast, because Prince Blavadsky wouldn't announce his engagement without a written contract. "But the poor dear had to be particular, for so many women were after him, and he couldn't work—can't be expected to, brought up as a royal personage."

"Royal personage!" It made Mrs. Farraday laugh to think of Enid's spring coronet. In the spring Enid would certainly be married to Penny, and it would be her beautiful Agatha who would be Princess Blavadsky, who would be calling the British Queen Mother "Aunt Alexy, just like that. . . ."

CHAPTER XV

THE house was eviscerated! Miss Mapes leaned over the banisters, saw the Doctor's great desk bumping on the pavement, hoisted into the moving van next to the onyx hall table. Opposite her, the parlor was a miniature Ritz. Palm trees and gilt chairs lined the wall.

Mary Ellen, pressing past workmen, stopped at Miss Mapes's, opened the corner of a card box. "My dress! What are you wearing tonight?" That was sweet of Mary Ellen to take it for granted. . . . Going up stairs, the child was a back festooned with boxes.

"Well, of all things!" Agatha's voice was muffled, then came out clear in the hall. "Mother!" Had Mother seen Mary Ellen's dress? She'd better come upstairs and look at what was going on. Did Mother remember about those large buckles that had been sent back? How she was wearing old ones tonight, and here was Mary Ellen with a new dress. Really stealing, Mother, that's what it was, for Mary Ellen to get money from Father on the day of one's début.

Hurry and lock up her clothes and make her return them tomorrow.

"Take your hand off my dress, or I'll scratch you in the face," in a voice Miss Mapes had never heard from Mary Ellen. Her nails were right behind it.

"Don't you touch Agatha!" Mary Ellen was a naughty child, a perfect nuisance exciting Agatha; ought to be spanked; ought to be put to bed; ought to have been sent by her father into the country. Mrs. Farraday tore up her youngest daughter in "ought-to-be" pieces in order to get her out of the way.

"Rats!" A door slammed. On the day of a party, family life was a can of impassioned sardines; no other comparison possible. Miss Mapes closed the office against it to see out of the window Dr. Squires walking across the backyard to the laboratory a latent Charleston in him; shaken to music he would have a shivery bowl-of-jelly look. . . .

Downstairs in a jiffy, she caught up with him, turned a key, stood close to the tiled walls beside the open door, held her skirts aside so he could get cleanly by over to the table and out again. "Thank

you, Doctor," hurt her, for deep underneath there was no "thank you" in her for Dr. Squires who thought the girl was acting as if a man were a pest, or as if she were a queen. She, a queen! He didn't believe she was even asked to the début tonight.

Would she dance with him at the party? He wanted to see if the girl would say she was ill, would love to catch a lie in her.

She wouldn't dance with him tonight because she wasn't asked to the party, Miss Mapes said.

No less a queen than ever—damn the girl's airs! "Not tonight, nor any other night," her eyes said, just as they had said this morning when he had asked her to dinner. And who, pray, was she to turn away from him now? Not even from the corner of a look did she admit his existence! The way to drive a man out of his mind was to stand curved away from him, her hand on the shelf, looking past him just as if she were all alone in the place—a man like himself who knew the best when he saw it—knew the best was there under the white linen; could tell it just the way he could tell the best in pictures. This woman was just like the pictures—made him

feel an outsider. To know a good thing and not be familiar with it—that hurt!

He could buy the top notch of everything if he had its price—pictures to hang on the wall, or women—could own them one way or another. If they were for sale, he got them, and if this girl wasn't for sale it was because she didn't see her case clear. What was the use of a working girl wasting her time on an old has-been of a doctor? he wanted to ask her. What did it matter if she was the Doctor's woman or not, since every one said so?

Standing there like one of her father's statues. . . . Cold? Yes, but, goddamn her, he felt something burning under the snow.

Out in the street soon, that's where she'd be, knocking at office doors up and down the city, hearing, "We have no place"—meaning, "You haven't the face for a secretary." Couldn't she consider him then, a young man with no wife and children? Take *one look* in his direction?—he, who was a gentleman now, all Dr. Farraday's top-liners for patients? He could almost tell her she didn't fool him a minute;

cursed himself for not having the nerve to let her know how much he was on to her.

For she stood relaxed against the wall now, not even bothering to stiffen against him. "You are less than nothing"—that's what she meant to signal, was it, eh? Wanted to drive him crazy, eh? Wanted him to marry her and get her out of her fix? Wanted to freeze him across, eh? That was it, wasn't it? He was right, wasn't he?—he knew a thing or two!

But why should an oncoming man marry that kind of a girl, when it was common talk that the old Doctor got her for nothing? Just for two cents he would tell her that she wasn't the kind men married, but he would give her jewels and motors and love—would let himself go on love, could love her to death, crush her as he watched her, inaccessible always, against the white tiles.

What was she thinking of, eh? Of Dr. Farraday? His woman, eh? Almost, almost, he said it this time, but he didn't dare! Had to fall back on, "Dr. Farraday hasn't one chance with his test!"

He had said that a hundred times, she thought,

letting him see boredom spreading a yawn all over her.

And there wasn't a thing the old doctor knew about the experiment that he didn't know better, the man was saying. Did she realize that he was just as good as the Doctor? Had helped him, in fact, "talking over the thing"? If the old Doctor did get his test—but he wouldn't—no one would ever know if it was his own or his assistant's, for they were fifty-fifty partners in the experiments. But here was the point, sensibly speaking:

"Look at the money in it already if the Doctor would see it that way—untold money to be made out of it at this very moment, if it is managed with sense."

She was listening to him at last, was she, like all the others now, interested in his prospects, eh? Not so damned aloof about profits, eh?

(I am going down on his own curves into the man's soul, she thought; unbelievable, the things he is letting me see. . . .)

If she let a man like himself care for her, "protect you, eh? (he is asking me to be his mistress

now, it is just about due, she thought) then you will be fixed for life." Could she get through her head what a position of power being his close friend would give her—working at the same time with Dr. Farraday, eh?—she, who knew all the secrets, came and went as she pleased in the Doctor's safe; millions in those secrets . . . people were after them, every day or two a bite. . . .

(Snake, she thought, snake behind glass, with semi-precious eyes, the fall of man clouding them.)

He felt glass between them, smooth, unbreakable surface; felt untouchable nearness, damn her! Who was she, anyway, to stand there perfectly dumb, a loose woman! Damn it, he was there, wasn't he, and yet he wasn't in her presence at all. And hadn't he offered her everything but marriage—everything? Watching coldness gather in her, he would tell her what he thought of her, take her down—he would tell her as a man of the world. . . .

He was standing on the steps, lighting a cigarette, taking one whiff, then another, going to speak just as a man of the world would speak to a woman try-

ing to trap him who couldn't . . . when he saw her look at him.

"Debonair, he thinks he looks, debonair. . . ." He couldn't guess the word that laughed at him, only knew it jeering passively, turning him into a spectacle.

Goddamn her, he could still feel her mocking at him behind the door that she shut quietly in his face. Dr. Farraday's woman jeered at him! Thought she could slam a door in his face, did she? He'd make her open it quickly. Gentleman, or no gentleman, would let himself go. The laboratory shook with him.

Would she answer him now, before he broke the door down?

To hell with her ridicule—he'd never wanted to strike a woman before. So he beat on the panels. The laboratory, like Miss Mapes's face, was white and closed.

She's making a fool of that man now, Bridget thought in the kitchen, but he had his house and a couple of motors—and what did a girl like that want anyway?

"Good for you! Keep him out," Mary Ellen called behind her window upstairs. Just too wonderful for anything to see Miss Mapes despising Dr. Squires. She wanted to clap her hands outside.

Downtown, Penny and Enid walked down the steps of the Municipal Building.

Did Enid realize now that she was Mrs. Archibald Pennington Farraday? Hadn't it been easy? When could they tell her mother anyway?—and she saw him hail a taxi. They could lunch at the Ritz, have everything on the menu, for most of Enid's money was left. Wasn't it "share alike," now they were married? "The deed is done now—" He kissed the words on her mouth in the taxi; but she said, "Not yet, Penny—" for with every kiss he seemed to put a Larry Cammack into her that squirmed away from those lips of Penny's. Because he wouldn't stop, she looked at the door, knew before she looked she hadn't the courage to jump. So she had to sit very close to Penny now, receiving his kisses.

CHAPTER XVI

"Goody, goody"—

Did Agatha know that by lying in bed she had missed seeing Miss Mapes shut the laboratory door in Dr. Squires's face? "He had beat against it with his fists; great, the way she wouldn't let him in." Mary Ellen gave her news on her way to get something to eat in the kitchen. "The Doctor's face was a sight—red as anything."

Cheat! Agatha's thought, for didn't Father's assistant, a man who had kissed her in the pantry, belong to her? "A beau, hanging back because of the Prince," was the way she always thought of Dr. Squires. Second choice for a Bishop's granddaughter perhaps, but a man most girls would be crazy about. (Poor Mother hadn't done half as well at her start.) Dr. Squires, in the background, had made her unhurried with Blavadsky. Sammy said, "A man felt an ace in a woman—" and Dr. Squires had been that ace in her. She said to herself, "He loves me," as she poured tea for the Prince, balancing a house in Sixty-Third Street against an "Aunt Alexy" in Eng-

land. The thought of that girl spoiling her game boiled in Agatha—a woman who Penny said, "ought to be put in the stocks," red letters pinned all over her—daring to shut a door on another girl's chance!

More than hurrying for lunch, Mary Ellen loved to ask Agatha, would she care to hear that the Prince had wanted to know: "Who is that virgin in white linen; won't you let me meet that angel?" Mary Ellen could turn into the Prince, so Agatha heard Blavadsky saying, "wirgin," right into her ears. And, moreover, did Agatha know that Penny had tried to kiss Miss Mapes? "Go to bed, baby," Miss Mapes had told him.

It was luck that Mary Ellen dodged the glass, Agatha knew afterwards, but she would have thrown it all over again, for no one could possibly appreciate how that child made murder a necessity.

"The Prince isn't your baby," Mary Ellen sang on her way to some cake in the kitchen. On "your" she let out what her teacher called "all her timbre" from her diaphragm.

Emmy, scattering wax on the parlor floor for her too-lovely-for-anything Agatha, eyes closed, sleeping

a beauty sleep on her pillow, heard that crash, then Mary Ellen's "your baby," a whole band on the stairway.

Mary Ellen met Mother running upstairs to hear about Agatha's wounded heart, she supposed. "You're to dance all that wax into the floor of the parlor—dance and dance, do you hear? It's Miss Mapes that makes you so rude to your sister; I'm coming," Mother called and Mary Ellen heard her ask: "Why don't you go to sleep, Agatha?"

But Agatha didn't want to sleep. How could Mother expect it of her with a Miss Mapes in the house? Did Mother know how that woman carried on with the men? "You may very well shudder, and you'll keep it up when you hear how the woman has just made a terrible scene in the backyard, banging the door in Dr. Squires's face—" That's the kind of a creature she was—working a man's feelings all up till he beat with his fists to get in to her— "And the Prince—the Prince too, Mother—" Miss Mapes had tried to arrange secret meetings, had almost succeeded; and Mother needn't think that there was nothing for her to worry about, for Miss Mapes had

kissed Penny—that Agatha knew for certain. Mary Ellen had seen it.

"Not my Penny!" It was wonderful to think how he'd escaped. Miss Mapes couldn't ever kiss Penny again, for her son was with Enid now—thank God —with Enid.

"But who knows what she does with Father?" Agatha shot out the word "prostitute" at Mother, because one said things nowadays, one went to the point—and wasn't that the point? What were they all going to do with a prostitute going about corrupting their men?

The word that Agatha used hurt her mother. One read about mistresses in history books, and of course there was Mary Magdalene—"but that word, Agatha. . . ."

"Well, that's what she is—just because it's your house doesn't make it any better."

Things were getting worse every minute. Miss Mapes downstairs, looking so quiet, and yet a bad woman underneath, at this minute ushering respectable patients into the Doctor's office. And often alone with John for hours. "Prostitute—who knows what

she does with Father?" And John was her husband. "Till death do us part," he had promised; she had a right to him, every bit of him was hers till he died. Mother must send Miss Mapes away tonight—"Shame her, disgrace her, as soon as Sammy Osborne comes into the house—disgrace her before Dr. Squires, before Father . . . no, not before the Prince!" For some reason, Agatha didn't want Blavadsky to see Miss Mapes disgraced.

"You'll never do it, Mother."

"Can't you trust me, Agatha?"

"You'll never dare—you'll let Father put it all over you."

"Just watch and see. I'll disgrace her tonight," Emmy promised. . . .

Outside the window at this moment, Penny was leaving Enid at her front door. "See, Mother," Agatha pointed out, "Penny coming home. He must have lunched with her." He certainly seemed to have plenty of money for taxis. Did Mother see how, when she followed her daughter's advice, things came

out all right? This was what "leaving things to me" at Nantucket had come to!

Almost at the front door, Emmy met her boy. For since that "engagement" of Agatha's, she couldn't wait to kiss him. "Is everything right with you, Penny? Sit down and tell me about it." "Well, Enid does love me," Penny admitted as he went upstairs (just leaving her there in the hall yearning) to tell his news to his sister.

"Come in, Penny. Close the door." He was to tell his sister right away.

Georgeous to stand against the panels and say, "I am married" to Agatha. Gave her something to chew on—thought you were a baby, did she? Thought you had to do just what she said, did she? And here you were flattening her all out with the news.

"My wife, Mrs. Archibald Pennington Farraday—wife—" Did Agatha hear?

(*Did* she hear him crow out the name?)

His wife, who was probably getting hell now from

the swell Mrs. Brazee across the way for going out with him. But he would give his mother-in-law, later, what was coming to her. "My mother-in-law, do you get it?" Agatha was too cold and sour for anything. Wasn't going to hand it to him.

Only said: "You'd better not get gay and fight with Mrs. Brazee, for we don't want Enid over here, and don't forget that." She was thinking in what a hole Enid must have been—Enid married to Penny! I have been right all along, done everything for the best. No one could ever say she had known a single thing.

Mrs. Brazee was scolding her daughter. For the Doctor had telephoned—"and you were out with that donkey, Penny Farraday—don't deny it." Marguerite had confessed everything.

When Enid said she'd just been out to lunch for a spree, and had forgotten all about Dr. Squires: did she care for that lout Penny—a soggy suet pudding, what he looked most like—did she? No, she didn't. "I don't love him at all, Mother." She positively loathed him—couldn't imagine now why she

had lunched with him, for he was like leeches to her. She shivered. Wanted to drive with her mother all afternoon, begged her not to leave her a moment, would have tea with her too.

But her mother said that Mr. Wyrzinsky was coming to tea. She would tuck up Enid at five to rest for the party. "Why, yes, child, of course Marguerite will sit outside and watch so no one will come in—but don't be silly. No one will get you, Enid."

Mother's arms were round her; she was kissing her. For really, Madeleine thought, Enid was twitching with nerves. She would get Dr. Farraday to look at the child, from her head to her heels.

CHAPTER XVII

At two o'clock sharp Dr. Farraday walked in on Miss Mapes, as she sat eating a cracker for luncheon on a gold chair in the midst of a floor that waved under his feet.

Was it a party?—gold chairs all about. Then he remembered of course it was a party, as the wonderful woman in white—was she also a bootlegger?—brought him a drink of whiskey. Pleasant to feel the stuff get into every little corner, warming him through, so his feet stopped slanting upon the floor.

And she had two more bottles for him; they were locked up in the laboratory safe. Would get him more if he wanted. Some patients were here now—would he wait just a moment? . . . rest?

"Are we in Campbell's funeral parlors, or are we not?" Mrs. Bertie Bowker was asking Lola McKee in the front room.

Lola agreed the place was certainly dressed up to its limit for tonight. Her daughter, Jinnie, was coming. "She has all she can do to keep her men

away from the wet party at Sherry's—for word has been passed round that the champagne would flow over there."

And Mrs. Bertie wanted Lola to tell her who was the girl in white linen who had gone into the office just before the Doctor, with two bottles of whiskey under her arm?

Was it possible that Mrs. Bertie hadn't heard about the Doctor's secretary? Why, it was common talk—the men called her "the mystery." Jo McKee threatened to get up something chronic so as to see her every day. Whiskey? Those women always drank—lived on excitement, they said.

Mrs. Bertie interrupted because of her "bridge at three"—the Doctor and the creature in white had been closeted five minutes already. She couldn't wait much longer—it was her heart—really sometimes it pounded so she told Bertie about it, but he just said she smoked too much. No one did listen to a woman's troubles at fifty, except a doctor at a dollar a minute.

Lola thought Dr. Squires was good at listening . . . to some people, and they both laughed at the

way he listened to Janie Stuyvesant, who went around saying: "This isn't the Victorian age."

And when a woman went around saying that, any one knew as well as Lola that she was up to something. Janie felt herself a Diane de Poitiers, vamping Dr. Squires, but the joke was that Dr. Squires was in love with the secretary. "Jo told me so." And had Mrs. Bertie seen what Dr. Squires had done with Madeleine Brazee's hips? They just weren't there that was all.

Mrs. Bertie was afraid Madeleine might need hips, for Jim Brazee was having a fearful week down town. Bertie said he wasn't solid at all, kept all his money fluid, whatever that meant; acted as if his business was just a game—Bertie thought it was awful; and it was terrible to think of Madeleine Brazee being poor—"The worst thing that can happen to anybody. . . ."

"Well, she won't be—that kind of woman never is." And Lola wanted to know if Mrs. Bertie had seen Madeleine with Wyrzinsky last night? He was a first violin, but in ten years she was willing to bet Mrs. Brazee would be flirting with a timpany—"No

last call for dinner-in-a-dining-car affairs for Lola McKee." They usually left a woman on a bait of air. Much better to go into sports. Mrs. Bertie ought to do the high dive every morning with her, turning at ten, in the air, over a swimming pool. To feel supple, that was the point, at fifty—never to let calcium into the joints. "Don't stop moving a moment, or you'll harden, dear," Lola whispered, for the room was filling with queer women—from the West mostly—and there was that creature in a white uniform coming into the door.

"Will Mrs. McKee please come in?"

Lola was right, Mrs. Bertie felt that no woman could afford a girl like that around her husband. "Too noticeable to be at all respectable."

Upstairs in the library, Penny heard the stupid old women downstairs, coming and going in Father's office (who cared if they lived anyway) talking about their diseases as if any one in the whole damned crowd had anything worth talking about. He would ash all the cigarettes over the floor if he wanted—liked to see his mother come in, looking at him imploringly—hoped she'd be cross—wanted to be rude

to her. He didn't ask her to kiss him, or to be sorry for him, did he?—didn't want Mother's kisses. "Let me alone." He ashed a cigarette right in front of her on the sofa. Would smoke up the whole damned box, if he wanted.

Mother didn't know he was married to Enid—that he had legal rights over the girl, had just seen her go out with her own mother; not a look had she given him behind Mrs. Brazee's back, and he had stood just where she could see him through the curtain.

Janes were easy, Sam had said; but Enid, his own wife, wasn't easy. He was getting crazy, thinking how he could get her away tonight. His own wife, to do as he pleased with, wasn't she? Just couldn't stand it sitting here thinking. Not a word to be got out of Mother about the ashes. Would like to test her, throwing choice ornaments around. Would like to pull Mary Ellen's hair. She would yap all right—only she was helping Mother somewhere. What to do—what to do to pass time until tonight? No chance with Agatha either—Agatha, who had locked her door and was trying to get some one on the tele-

phone all afternoon. Not a book to read in Father's library—rows of classics, histories, Russian books, too—nothing doing in Father's library.

Nothing to do there for Penny all afternoon, except to watch the clock crawl on the mantelpiece until Enid, his wife, came back at half-past four, following her mother into the door of the house opposite. It shut like a lid on her. Peer as he would, not a curtain rustled anywhere all over the house—and, God Almighty, this was his wedding day! Oughtn't a man on his wedding day to have orange blossoms and his girl? He wanted to kick the sofa to pieces.

Out in the hall he heard Miss Mapes saying: "Will you come in, please?" So polite, Sammy's jane, opening the door now for an old lady, cooing: "Come right in," to Father's patients—Sammy's jane! Could you beat it?

"Sammy Osborne is coming tonight." Penny called the message over the banisters to give the woman a jolt. Hadn't she better wait to see Sammy Osborne?

If there was one thing he hated it was a hypocrite, and the girl didn't even bat an eye.

But Miss Mapes who was counting the patients in the front parlor thought Penny must be crazy, screaming over the banisters. And there were eight more women for Dr. Farraday to see. That horse in the morning!—clop! clop! his hoofs had fallen heavily—all the prance out of him. There must have been meal bags piled behind him. And she saw the patients as meal bags loaded behind Dr. Farraday, meal bags under palm trees, waiting to take out his prance. Beckoned to one now. How it would startle the old lady, to know any one thought of her as a meal bag waiting to be piled behind the clop, clop of the Doctor.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Mother, kiss me. You won't let anybody take me away?" Penny's "You belong to me now, Enid, every bit of you," spoken from the side of his mouth as he helped her out of the taxi, made Mother—tucking her in the Du Barry bed—the only one to help her.

"Go to sleep, Enid." This child holding her hands, then her dress, was a baby, made Madeleine cuddly. She would have stayed, asked her, "Where's the pain, darling?" except for Wyrzinsky downstairs. Would ask her tomorrow.

As she pulled the shade down Dr. Farraday, across the street, stepped into his motor. Upstairs, no Emmy was watching for him—lucky Emmy. "Don't wake before six, Enid." Not for years had it seemed a little tearing to go away from Enid, so small in bed, closing her eyes so obediently as one went down to Wyrzinsky.

"Six calls. Home at eight punctually," the Doctor told Guerin, the chauffeur, who took the list.

His test tubes were in the incubator, waiting.

"All's well," Miss Mapes had said by the newel post. Her words went out with him, were in him now, reverberating. That look in Dr. Squires's eyes, as he passed Miss Mapes on the stairs, reverberated, too. She hadn't noticed the wild thing glaring out of a sleek everyday face at her—not a look from her for Dr. Squires. It was John Farraday who had responded; for a moment on his own doormat he had been wildness lusting to get at the throat of another wildness, hadn't known he could feel carnivorous about a man who looked at a girl passing by.

"I love you," Wryzinsky's eyes said to Madeleine as she came toward him at five, a fresco, out of the dim room. Her line from hip to toe made lingering folds in her gown. The firelight, glinting her head on the surface, striped her hair in dark grooves. A tigress to be tamed, Eric would have thought her. She seemed to this boy to glisten. No jewels on her neck, only his flowers in her hand. He saw her lay them on the tea table between them.

"I don't want your body," his eyes said, "only the mystical you."

Bennett, coming in with walnut cakes and toast, seemed terribly coarse, for there was no hunger in Wyrzinsky's eyes. But the poor boy was helplessly unfed; refused, then absorbed the cakes one by one —then the toast.

How stupid to be munching, he thought, while her fingers cadenced in and out of the cups. . . . She envied him his hunger, his struggle—wasn't it through pain that one saw things?

"You know that?" He reverenced her. He'd known if they sat alone, she would talk in overtones. Under her tinsel gayety last night, hadn't he divined her, misunderstood by her husband? "My husband is always busy making money," she had whispered—nothing more, but he knew she was starving.

Madeleine wanted just one cake most dreadfully. Dr. Squires had forbidden them on account of her hips; she had given the word to herself, "No more sweets," over the grapefruit this morning. She would take just one—no, she wouldn't. It was curious how a little cake with a walnut on top tortured one—effaced any man—for a moment.

"Eating is nothing to me." (She relinquished the

cake.) She could go for days without eating; any one could who had fourth dimensional values. "All this"—her hand gathered pictures, tapestry, tea, even Bennett, in its gesture—"all this" was something to be got through with, to "discard for great realities."

"You feel it?" He had known this house imprisoned her. His silence asked her to come into his dreams. His dreams were all hers—his eyes gave her the run of the place.

(All the cakes were gone now, all but one; she would perhaps have that later.) He was telling her about the world of reality they would share from this moment; he would lift the everyday world—that she had called so beautifully "all this" just a moment ago—like an imbecile mask from off life's face. They would get to the fount of things together, pictures, poetry and music. He would write all his music to her.

"I will draw you out of my violin—you will sing out of the wood." Trying not to tremble.

" 'Soul could lie with soul.' " Some one said that who felt inner closeness was so perfect he didn't want

to come any nearer. Not much to be spoken when he felt as he did. "God is good." As her nails closed in a diamond circle on her long holder. And he watched her smoke, soften the edge of things, put the room out of focus, so her head came to him now—gold, hazing through a mist.

"I worship you." He hadn't known that he could feel this great love, kiss the pain of it.

So she let herself go as far as the rim of his eyes, stayed there on the brink, knew she couldn't go further, for then she would be homeless—away from Jim. So she stayed "spotless" now, where Jim must find her in a few minutes—for wasn't it nearly six o'clock? Poised on the edge of a mystic escape—that was it—and she gave the boy her fingers to steady herself.

He trembled all over now, but didn't kiss her hand, tried to keep her spirit the center of desire. He had felt it seeking him last night; she mustn't think that he wanted to take liberties. . . .

It must be six o'clock now, but it wasn't Jim's step that made her jump with her heart—only Bennett who was coming through the door to take away tea.

"Leave that cake on the mantelpiece, Bennett." (It could wait there, she might want it or not.) "Take out the rest of the tea." Was it possible that Bennett was saying that Mr. Brazee had just called her up, had said he'd try to be home later? If he didn't come, Mrs. Brazee was to go to Miss Agatha's party alone.

"Mightn't be back all night? . . ."

"I just gave her the message word for word, and she talked to me all of a sudden like a mad woman," Bennett recited afterwards. (His story began at the moment when Madeleine had brought herself very quickly out of Wyrzinsky's eyes.) "She had given strict orders that she was to be called any time Mr. Brazee telephoned, she said to me, pounding the pianner. I thought she would strike me, she was that upset—and what should I say but the truth, that Mr. Brazee said the Madam wasn't to be disturbed at all? As I said those words the woman seemed to go crazy."

Wyrzinsky too, who never spoke Madeleine's name afterwards in all his life, watched her screaming to Bennett like a wild woman: "You're here to take orders, aren't you? You're a fool, a stupid fool!"—saw

her shiver as though she had a chill. Then the next minute she was out in the hall calling up Hanover 46000. She must have Mr. Brazee . . . Central . . . Central . . . must have him at once—but he *must* answer, for he had just called. "Then give me the manager—the manager must get him."

"Perhaps Mr. Brazee didn't call from the office," Wyrzinsky heard Bennett suggest through the portières, before he went out with the tea, an air of uncluttering himself from a situation that wasn't any too good for a servant.

"But I must have him. All day I've been waiting —I simply must have him!" she was crying into the telephone, unfrozen years in her voice.

If she had cared so about Mr. Brazee, why had she said last night, "My husband makes money," and sighed? But when one worshiped a woman, one didn't pry into things. He wanted to comfort her, to let her walk over him, wanted to make up to her. . . .

She was coming back to him now through the curtains, all bedraggled, gusts gathering and regathering in her face—making no pretense before

him. He loved her for that, would kneel to her, offer her all that he had—his life, as long as he lived. Not much, but it was hers. Didn't she see he would kill himself if it would help her? So he went down on his knees—wanted to kiss the feet that had walked up that path of sorrow.

But she didn't want his comfort—and why was that boy kneeling to her with that ridiculous air? "Get up! Get up!" She couldn't bear him there on the floor. Jim was to see him worshiping her, she couldn't endure all the worship about, and no Jim anywhere. She began her crying again: "Get up, I can't bear you." She hated Wyrzinsky for not being Jim, wanted to make him suffer as she did. "Go away. I adore my husband—go away," she sobbed, and pushed him.

Even in what Sir Eric would have called one of her most "adorable tantrums," Wyrzinsky's "good-by," said so very quietly, gave her a shock. He was going, then? She had imagined him pleading as men did when one pushed them; but he was looking at her as he had looked at Enid last night.

So she put out her hand—"Stay." Didn't want him to go like that, with closed eyes that would never

come back. Smiled through her tears. "Tomorrow at six? Won't you? I'll be here waiting."

But he didn't see her.

"Wyrzinsky!"

But he never turned his head. It might have been Jim going out of the door.

He went, leaving her to cry alone about Jim and a little bit about Wyrzinsky—and how mixed things were—to eat up that cake, icing and all, and to have it taste good!

If Madeleine had telephoned Jim Brazee at five, he would have answered her. For at that hour he was looking out of the window of "the very best office in town—nothing cheap about it anywhere," as Miss Minnegerode, his stenographer, often told Miss Pepperile, her assistant.—Thinking: My failure has come—I am bankrupt, not a cent left. "Extra! Extra! Great failure of Jim Brazee." It would be called down in the streets in the morning. He would lie, smashed in state, in the first column of the first extra. "Knew Jim Brazee well—silent fellow. Why didn't he stow away some money—thought he could keep the game going forever." Men would crowd

round his name for a moment wanting to get into the spectacle. Even to stand near a smash lifted a man from the neutral stream rushing down there in the street, heads bobbing on its surface—young heads, gray heads, all sharp with the single lust of the hunter. He knew them well, had bobbed along beside them for twenty years. . . .

Seen from this window, how entirely secure the city lay flat before him, diagrammed like a map. The Mayor could hand it up to St. Peter. "Isn't it a pretty sight? See the people at five in the afternoon draining out of the buildings into the sluices; see the river spreading out into small streams, threading out to homes, a home at the end of each man! Here's an office now," pointing. "Jim Brazee owned it; the place got clogged up with Brazee; tomorrow the ticker has to be ripped out and Jim with it. You'll see in the morning all that stream that you're watching will turn the other way, fill the place up again, rinse out the office; the circulation will start up. You won't notice that Jim Brazee has been here at all."

Behind his back was the entity of his empty office

—the "hunger bond" had made it a body functioning. All the men who had come there every day for years would feel that office listed among the casualties tomorrow—more real than the death of a friend.

He would close doors and windows like lids tonight, leave the place decent and cold, an office stiff —laid out. No charwoman would come. Wall Street is swift; corpses don't have to be washed. No door to be opened by Seger tomorrow morning, no clerks, no blue-coated boys. Billy Winter, his junior partner, was safe. "Billy's experience," old Mr. Winter, who owned the Marlboro Hotel block, would call his son's failure.

"Jim Brazee was a man anyway, Father," Billy said to old Mr. Winter at eight that evening.

Strange it was to see his father all dressed up for dinner in his paneled library, talking about his boy's next job while that office lay stone dead downtown! No more tic-tic-tic. Its beat stopped forever.

"Jim Brazee paid every cent, Father; sent the men and women out with wages ahead—stood all day not raising his voice, as if it were a game he

was losing, saw everything wiped out like some one in history."

"Napoleon at Waterloo is the name you're bungling for," his father said. It was an expensive experience.

Tears in his son's eyes—there must have been a buccaneer in Jim Brazee to fire a boy so.

And Billy's father wondered what Mrs. Brazee would do—a great golden creature, he remembered. "Your mother never approved of his wife. Come down to dinner, Billy. . . ."

Jim Brazee had loved Billy. If he had a son . . . But that was an unpleasant position to put Billy in. . . .

How old Zogbaum's red tie had stood out—"Good-by, sir,"—filing past after twenty years. Home machinery going safely round—family fixed—didn't make the old man happy. Wouldn't believe that the place (sixteen stories high, where he had lived at his own top notch) was to be closed. He didn't want to rest, didn't want to sit on the porch and see children playing croquet. . . . His tears

rolled down grooves in a leather face. And Jim had never thought of fat Miss Minnegerode before except as part of the furniture into which she settled down every morning, inert, all but fingers that played on the typewriter like a virtuoso, faster, faster—to keep hunger away.

"I'll always say you were a gentleman, sir."

After twenty years, one moment of life had looked at him out of her eyes. Astonishing that he loved Miss Minnegerode as she trekked out of the door.

Goldmark too—head clerk, who said, "I'll be waiting sir—you'll start again, sir."

Loved them all—fighters welded together.

Had Napoleon felt this way saying good-by to his old guard? "Suffused with emotion," history said when the old gambler looked at his men not as fodder for a moment.

How about Madeleine . . . who never considered the office except as something downtown that kept her going. Take away the feeling that one had to turn a spiggot and gold flowed toward her, and what became of Madeleine? Just what? For the first time she would have to make her own answers. Had al-

ways known this moment would come—had been gambling for years—Madeleine on every pile that he staked?—as the wheels went round. If he lost, his woman would have to be handed over with the pile. She hadn't dreamed what piles she had lain in, thought of herself cradled securely uptown in a big house. . . . The precariousness of Madeleine was all the zest of his gambling!

So Madeleine was wiped out now. Courtesan luck, and that was fair, wasn't it—a courtesan and a gambler to share their luck together?

"I'll be waiting—you'll start again, sir." Goldmark, was sure of it. But only a man who had a worth-while mate would start all over again. Easy to know a woman one could pioneer with; not many of them about. He thought of Miss Mapes. That girl would share crusts, sleep outside under the trees, not mind anything if her mate were with her, would call to a man: "All's well." "All's well," a man would cry back. No bolting of doors with Miss Mapes! Doors could swing for her safely. In and out of a man's spaces she would go, never staking a claim.

"Wyrzinsky is coming to tea"—a delicate exhibitionism in Madeleine's hand this morning holding out roses to smell. It said, "Eric is all very well for an outside affair, but Wyrzinsky is different."

Madeleine was pouring tea now with her first violin, waiting for him to see the holiness of Wyrzinsky's worship all over her—half Astarte, half Mary. . . .

Saying good-by, her eyes had searched up and down his face, tried to get to him. The real Jim hadn't flickered a sign to her, but she wasn't deceived. She knew. He knew that she knew.

"Good-by—I'll bring you the emeralds," his last words had been said to dog's eyes that watched, homeless, and would wait all day, watching. The humble eyes in her face tore at him now, because he didn't believe them, and he couldn't bear to think that dog's eyes were a ruse to get in.

He knew Madeleine ("No, you don't. Try me again," she kept saying.) Knew if she wanted a thing, she would make herself different shapes to get it, wouldn't stop at humble dog's eyes in a face.

And that was what frightened him.

If he started again, poor, she working beside him, if the courtesan in her got bedraggled and dropped off, if he saw her tired—old—imploring him with those homeless dog's eyes, calling "Jim, let me in," if he opened his spaces—afterwards mightn't he find her triumphantly staking them out?

"I'm in," she might say, "I'm in by a ruse! . . ." And hadn't he been through it all before? . . .

He was tired, so tired he didn't feel his body any more, could pinch his hand and feel nothing. It took up the telephone for him.

"Hello, hello. I want Bennett—no, not Mrs. Brazee—just Bennett." Mrs. Brazee wasn't to be disturbed on any account. Wasn't to wait for him, was to go to the party alone. "I don't know when I'll be home."

His obliging body took his pistol out of the desk drawer, laid it before him. "Like a Dumas hero," she had said to him in her charmeuse voice last night. But she didn't know him at all. A Dumas hero didn't kill himself guarding spaces, didn't turn backward to look through his façade as Jim did now to watch a small Jim in the street who was

shot through the head . . . a little tin soldier strutting about. God, what a belly! It had grown since this morning.

Madeleine was rushing out from somewhere—no courtesan now . . . far away . . . and he was afraid to look at her kneeling there in the street holding the little Jim tight against her. His blood was staining her dress, her dog's eyes looked up at him through the façade—homeless eyes—

He mustn't let her in, mustn't— Mustn't look out on her—must turn his back on her, go out and out.

He heard the telephone ring, but it was far away. Never now, never would Madeleine make him open his doors.

"It doesn't answer, Madam," the manager said to Madeleine. "We have rung several times, and there doesn't seem to be any one there."

CHAPTER XIX

FROM eight to nine o'clock Agatha's début was scattered all over the city.

"Let's go to the party together," Lola McKee telephoned Mrs. Bertie. For it was going to be as good as a play to see Mrs. Van Peyton giving tone to the evening; and Madeleine Brazee—sheathed to an outline—making the "colonial" in Mrs. Van Peyton bristle; Janie Stuyvesant would be doing the Lorelei act with Dr. Squires. Janie's face was to be "lifted" for Christmas anyway. It would be their last look at that Janie they had known.

Mrs. Bertie hoped they would have the luck to see "the creature" dancing about.

"At ten, then?" Lola asked, and Mrs. Bertie agreed. Lola's Jinnie was going at nine-thirty out of kindness to Agatha.

The telephone safely closed against Lola, did Dr. Squires really care for Janie? Mrs. Bertie would have so liked to know if there could be love anywhere for a woman of fifty, would like to have something to live for—but not diving. (That morning

plunge of Lola's was a little suicide every day at ten.) Would like to be something beside a smoke screen for Bertie. For "my wife" had kept Bertie from marrying no end of low creatures.

At fifty it came over one, "Am I going to die, just a smoke screen?" All one's friends asking the same question—in the same fix! Wasn't "What am I to do after fifty?" the centerpiece at any luncheon?

"If you want to see the woman of fifty worked out, go to the eighteenth century." Janie said she had found her there "so remarkable" that she was going to write a book about her with Dr. Squires.

So Mrs. Bertie in French conferences had searched, found them blooming there, just as Janie had said. "Full of sex charm, and with secondary sex charms all tucked away and ready to wear at eighty," the French teacher explained, trotting out that old mannequin, Ninon de Lenclos.

And of course, fifty would bloom in France, centuries ago, where one couldn't possibly get to it—never in New York, where one could ring its front door bell.

So she had asked Bertie, could he love Janie?

Bertie—quite coarse—had never heard of a man falling in love with a grandchild in a woman—but then Bertie didn't see a woman past thirty.

"Your children," all the solution she had ever heard; and what were children after all? Hadn't she and Bertie got Gwendolyn Margaret—who didn't want a soft life any more—living in Labrador giving serums to Eskimos? And wasn't Lola's Jinnie going to live like a bachelor in the spring? Children weren't enough for a woman! She needed something else badly, something—what? Didn't know exactly, as she put on her black dress. Only, if Dr. Squires didn't care about Janie, it must give some point to Janie's clothes to even think that he did. . . .

And it was quality a man cared about in a woman —Janie Stuyvesant was saying to Janie in a mirror —that is if he was a mystic like Dr. Squires, who talked a great deal about men and women to her when she was Dr. Farraday's patient. "Between a man and a woman, the unseen is the thing," the first time she met him. "All that Romeo and Juliet fairy-tale, obsolete sentimentality. What has a Juliet to

offer beside a woman of fifty who knows things? You have only to read history, Mrs. Stuyvesant, to find that all the great passions took place late in life.

"Madame Récamier at fifty (he had them on his fingers) skipping to Naples—Chateaubriand after her; that woman of sixty-two, who Byron said had almost made a fool of him—wasn't Walpole mad about Madame du Deffand, who was seventy—" (seventy gave one a frisky vista).

His soft voice lapped one round.

"A woman has charm or she hasn't it. If she has it, it makes all the difference." He had kissed her on her hair, once on her forehead—and that time in front of a club window that he told her he loved her; but he had never dared go very far. The woman must be courageous, must grasp what she wanted when it came to her . . . But did it? Anyhow, one just had to believe it, or die.

"Hand me the mirror." Janin said: "Many ladies much older than Madame wore dresses shorter and lower, Mlle. Mariette had assured her."

But did Molly think she looked all right, and what coat did she look best in?

"Would she wear green now?" Molly hoped for the love of Heaven she could help yawning outside, and next time you'd better believe she'd pick a young one to serve, who wouldn't camp in front of a mirror all night keeping a girl from her friends. And what use was it to fix up an old face that was gone anyway? Down the hall on the way to her evening out, couldn't she hear the woman now, with the honey in her voice, calling up Dr. Squires? Nothing the matter with her at all, except running after the young man.

"Hello, Dr. Squires."

It was Mrs. Stuyvesant—Janie—on the wire, who just wanted to say a word alone to the Doctor before they met in that crowded ballroom. Had he got that gardenia she had sent for his buttonhole? Did it make any difference to him that she would be there?

Dr. Squires was looking forward to a dance with her, couldn't tell her how anxiously over the telephone. (If she were more mindful of crossed wires. Most awkward if Mrs. Van Peyton took this moment to have a little word with him.) Mrs. Stuyve-

sant sending her love to him now! "Good-by until then," and had he heard "dearest"? Women were reckless, thought nothing of a doctor's reputation. Let one of them say "dearest," and half a dozen others would drop out of his practice.

Nevertheless, he hoped that Miss Mapes would catch him turning Mrs. Stuyvesant around and around at the dance—a woman that Miss Mapes couldn't even leave a visiting card on—watch from the laboratory inaccessible society turning and turning.

"Mrs. Van Peyton isn't a woman," Mrs. Brazee said once. "She is a survival." Gave one the feeling of an escaped ichthyosaurus wandering around outside a museum. "Look at her now in front of her mirror! There's not a thing about her that would startle even George Washington," Madeleine would have said at this moment.

"And why should one startle anything?" Mrs. Van Peyton's attitude. When one had a Signer of the Declaration of Independence in the family, couldn't one settle down? "Signers," she said to Janie (who had a poor one—still he had signed), "set one

apart in a little society of fenced tradition,"—all the signers' offspring could cluster there. Outside, divorce, Christian Science, Childs restaurants, the Charleston and "all these modern atrocities" could go on with impunity—not to speak of that Brazee woman, who could never have addressed one a hundred and fifty years ago, nor have held the ink for one to sign.

There was something in ambush about that woman in gold; all the signer in Mrs. Van Peyton felt it and trembled. She had meant to give her a lesson tonight, to make her very well aware of the fence, only that Sir Eric had said did she know that Mrs. Brazee was giving a royal dinner in the spring? And of course, when royalty came to New York, a representative woman sacrificed herself. America first and always—that was Abigail Van Peyton. Tonight noblesse oblige would make her a signer to Mrs. Brazee in the very largest sense of the word.

"Part my hair perfectly plain." Nellie listened "most every night" to how her mistress always wore her hair like the Signer's wife who hung over the Sheraton sideboard. "Plain except for side-curls,

Nellie—in a democracy one had to conform."—And where would the curls be got from, her hair like a wisp? Nellie thought, hearing that a lady always dressed unobstrusively.—"Please pin up my lace vest, pin it up very high." (Janie, who said "my friend, Dr. Squires," must notice how plainly she dressed.)

Considering Janie's decolletés, "my" was indelicate. One didn't say "my" to Sir Galahad—who told another woman, "On the astral plane you are younger than I, Mrs. Van Peyton." And would she mind his saying that he felt an older civilization moving in her? Could he tell her she had made him understand the word "lady."

Janie must face things, was flighty. Dr. Squires was *her* friend. Poor Janie! Very soon it would be somebody's duty to tell her she was making a fool of herself.

The maid would please hand her her crystals—the ones her great-great-grandmother wore at Washington's inaugural ball. "We have no such balls now, Nellie. Society isn't what it was then. My black velvet coat, of course."

Driving in her carriage at nine-thirty sharp, would Mrs. Farraday get the Bishop to come to her party? Such a dear man! So inflexible about the Virgin's antecedents; said "obey" so firmly in the marriage service—and after all hadn't the whole ceremony been built around that word? And that pure Greek line of his—Agatha captured it.

And Mrs. Van Peyton tapped on the window. The coachman knew those three knocks meant him to hurry, knew too that Mrs. Van Peyton wouldn't feel any party had started unless she was there.

At eight o'clock Agatha said "Hello, Blavadsky" in a pulpy voice on the tenth ring today. "Yes," he was coming—as if there was no understanding between them. He had a way of turning the Romanoff on and off. Whenever she spoke of the money he wanted, the Prince in him received a petition. "We can have ten thousand now, Blavadsky—it's perfectly certain!"

"Was it written down in a contract, or whatever Americans called it?" He spoke as if he were in a country of savages.

"No, it isn't, but it will be tomorrow." She could promise him that. (She would have to put terrible pressure on Father.)

About their engagement—could she tell a few people? Mrs. Brazee, for instance? But Blavadsky said they would have to wait until the money was written down in ink; a man of his position . . .

But didn't he love her? It was terrible to pay all that, and not get any love—and she was beginning to care for this icy Romanoff she couldn't seem to make do anything she wanted.

Why did a groan come to her now through the receiver? Had some one hurt him? Easy to imagine a Russian biting his ear, or banging his head, for weren't they the strangest people in all the world? "The party's receiver is off," all the answer she got. It made a sick spot in her until she heard the butler say later: "Prince Blavadsky," and saw him walk into her party like a Czar, so divinely indifferent.

No, he didn't love her. He howled it, put the receiver down to keep the howl from her, wept on his bed, he, a Romanoff, smelling onions that leaked

through the keyhole of a hall bedroom where breath over-lapping breath colored the walls. Royal blood in him, and he had sold his soul to her! It wallowed before him in mud. When a Prince needed it, he took money; but he would never love her, never. She could put it on a table in piles of gold; he wouldn't say "Thank you" to her. But would despise this girl who was buying him. "Cheap!" He screamed the word. Vile bargain hunter who picked up a man when he was starving, made him a beast, blackened him forever! He had every right to the money without Agatha, for wasn't he the real thing? Could Lenin wipe it out? Wasn't he a Prince for certain, just as Agatha's brother was a flunkey for certain? It was his Fate that caught him—made this American woman the only way he could be taken care of. But a Romanoff could remain all his life a block of ice toward any one who degraded him.

"God!"—he cried out in a frenzy. He couldn't live any more with the thought of his beautiful mother stabbed—vile men looking at the blood on her face—unless he saw God. "You know I am pure at heart, show me Your face." But God hid behind

that big blonde Agatha. God was with Natushka, the little seamstress across the way—her white body and her eyes that were born searching—waiting to come to him. But between them were Agatha's eyes —opaque—cream spilled in them; a terror in him that she might bear him a creamy-eyed son who couldn't see God. . . .

"Natushka, darling, where are you?" When he came home from the party, she would be sitting on this bed, would put her hands on his forehead that burned; he would kiss her poor little fingers, cracked with sewing. She would kneel beside him saying her poor little prayers over him. He would humble himself to her. "Natushka, I am the vilest of the vile."

"You can't work, my Prince, you are weak, you have to be taken care of." She would understand. Something divine in her. She loved, would make the sign of the cross there on his forehead. . . .

And his shirt, hanging over the chair, wasn't very clean. His dress suit was rumpled. Was no one here to keep a Romanoff clean? For there always had been.

Cold and stern he made his face, knotting his tie

in the mirror, as royalty looked when it went to the scaffold. He would look that way tonight at this Agatha—who stood between him and his vision of God.

It was too late with the party almost here . . . but now that Penny had married . . . of course Mother didn't know it but, "Really, Mother, you ought to get a new gown from Paris"—and how ridiculous for Mother to say "Expensive." "You owe it to your children to be as smart as Enid's mother." If Mother didn't dress well, she would be trampled on "and Penny wouldn't like that, Mother." Penny's mother-in-law changed Penny, put him in front of a bank account—not his really—only parents did die in the end for the benefit of their children. "You mustn't ever wear that gray-satin dress again, Mother."

"For Heaven's sake, what is it, Mother?" And why did she keep on saying, "Oh, Agatha!" as if she were dazed? And then asking one: "How about the Prince, Agatha, darling?" Even at her own début a girl couldn't have a moment alone.

"Of course, I got the Prince on the wire, Mother,

and of course he told me he loved me. Otherwise, why . . ."

Mother wanted one's emotions made out like a grocery list.

"Shall I wear this diamond garter buckle under the knee, Mother? Enid does." And of course, "Wear it under the knee, dear." If Enid had worn a nose ring, "Wear a nose ring," Mother would say.

"Oh, Agatha!"

Mother was going on again.

"If the Prince could only see you—not now."

Not of course now, in her pink chemise and silver slippers and silk stockings, with her hair taking the loveliest ripples straight out of the comb—but now, now he could see her child. Now! . . . as Miss Turner, the dressmaker, slipped her dress on. . . .

"Don't muss her hair, all those tendrils, Miss Turner."

He would be simply crazy about Agatha in that dress that one had saved for, a few dollars at a time. All the trouble of saving nothing, now that Agatha was standing in white satin with hand-put-on brilliants. Agatha, all finished! Agatha, the shining

center of everything now. Guests, music, ice cream, men in black suits, heaps of them, all imploring a dance, rayed out from her. Agatha, burning everything into a shadow. A mother's own self all over again, only more beautiful—she made one a girl in a limitless world. Emmy's heart beat with Agatha's—she knew now what it was to be a Princess. "Dear me!" She must have been up and down stairs all day, and she hadn't even felt her feet.

Penny, dressing with great care, heard Mother's "Come down and see Agatha."

"Can't come, Mother." This Agatha business was enough to make a man sick. He wasn't busy with a sister just now, hadn't time, was making his own honeymoon plans himself, knew just where and when and how he would take Enid away from the ball tonight—it ought to be a wedding party for himself and Enid by rights—no sister in it at all.

He saw Mrs. Brazee's window light up opposite, thought, "There's Enid dressing in her mother's room!" A little foot was slipped into a gold shoe, a yellow dress falling over a bobbed head . . . bare

shoulders . . . and he in this old garret room across the street.

Agatha said nine-thirty was the time Enid was due. All the afternoon, and still a whole hour to wait till he saw her—and then before people. "Sunday perhaps we can get off alone," she had said in the taxi. Thought this was like any other party, did she? Just going to dance and go home afterwards, was she? Well, he'd show her he wasn't the man to wait for any "perhaps Sunday." She was going to know tonight that she was his own wife and nobody else's. She was his own wife, wasn't she? "See her alone on Sunday perhaps—" He'd show her! And he looked at his watch every five minutes. . . .

Enid thought Mother was looking lovely doing the chaperon act in black velvet for Agatha's party . . . asking Marie to sew the back of her dress higher and higher. No, she wouldn't have anything on her face, she said.

"I wish my hair wasn't dyed, Enid."

"Madam looks as young as Miss Enid." And Marie was right. For Mother did look a young girl,

timid—only that was such a silly word to use to Mother, or to think that she was going to cry any minute.

"Oh, Mother, darling," for now she was that nursery picture of a child's face pressed against the window pane, watching. It put one out in the dark to look at her, so one couldn't help kissing her when Marie went out for a moment. Why had she ever been that other kind of mother? Pushing a daughter into the spotlight! One could have told everything to this sad mother, could have taken her right into her troubles, could now—only it was too late, forever too late.

It was almost as though Mother heard one think.

"You love me, Enid? When you kiss me like that you could take me right into your confidence, hold back nothing?" Mother talking wildly, imploring, as if she were a little girl and you were her mother. "Why, you couldn't shut me out now, Enid, not if I asked you to take me in? You positively couldn't leave me outside, could you, Enid?"

If it only weren't too late.

One felt so sorry for Mother, knew that Father

was in it somehow, for she wouldn't wear Sir Eric's flowers, no she wouldn't wear any. "Not even pearls, Marie." She shuddered at pearls.

She looked lovely as she came downstairs in white fur, perfectly spotless!

At the front door Mother—all shy like a girl with Bennett, not like herself at all—called back: Would Bennett please come over for her, if Mr. Brazee called up again? And most particularly: "Mr. Brazee mustn't be allowed to get off the wire again." If Mr. Brazee were in a hurry and wanted to ring off, Bennett was to say that it was a matter of life and death Mrs. Brazee wanted to speak to him about. Did Bennett understand exactly?

". . . life and death. Yes, Madam." Bennett was repeating the words as if they were an order for toast and cookies for tea.

It was because of Larry Cammack that one just knew how Mother felt underneath when she said in her voice like a hostess that she was silly to be anxious; Father had probably started uptown hours ago. In fact, she wasn't anxious at all.

It was one thing for Mother to be worried about

Father, who would have to come home sooner or later, but what would Mother feel if she were married to a ferocious boy named Archibald Pennington Farraday? And if the closer he came, the more one loved Larry Cammack—Larry! whose name would always be the fakir's hatpin sticking in one's side, always—even now crossing the street to Agatha's party. . . .

"Go easy, easy with them cans," Charles' men had said, lifting aluminum onto the pavement at Farraday's. "Is this Farradays'?"

"This is Farradays'." Nora held the door open for the croquettes made out of chicken to come in—chickens who had to have their necks wrung and their feathers pulled before they could come to the party—the kitchen boys at Charles' knew that all right. "Them swell guys will punish the chickens good." The men yesterday morning had cleaned bird after bird.

Nora saw cases and cans carried through the back door. "Put her down gently, boys, so she doesn't

break," was the way the ice cream landed in the kitchen.

A little party within a party; some woman saw squinting from a three-story-up observation window across two backyards into the Farraday kitchen. A servant in white, the cook, was cutting great slices of cake for men in black; a servant in black was pouring stuff into glasses—whiskey probably. For the men touched glasses and quaffed.

"You're to be careful, hide the bottle. The young gentleman, Mr. Penny, was after it all day." Nora emptied a bottle of V.O.P.'s best for the headwaiter.

The woman opposite saw the men smoking big cigars, sprawling on their chairs. The smoke swirled. Through it a man pulled the servant in black down to him, got a smack in the face. "You mind your own business," Nora screeched at him. Roars of laughter dowsed him. It was a vital party, the woman who was watching thought, this party within a party bubbling out from the struggle for dollars and cents.

"I'll be there at eight o'clock." So Miss Mapes had said. So she waited now on the laboratory steps.

"Perhaps this test is like all the others." He'd warned her as he shut the incubator door on the tubes. "What does it matter, today or tomorrow, when it's waiting for you, Dr. Farraday?" Hadn't Koch stumbled over and over again into his quake, and come out all right again? Come to that hadn't Christ made a path over turbulence, and never once fallen into the water? She had dosed him up with have-a-heart phrases. "All's well," she had called from the newel post—then wished she hadn't as Dr. Squires passed by.

The big house was very powerful tonight. Kitchen windows were headlights, a rush and a roar behind them. All about her houses lit up—little worlds kindling behind curtains, unexplored . . . Mary Ellen's shadow passing behind a shade upstairs, Mary Ellen dressing herself in the yellow dress, trying to undermine Agatha. In ten years, just by walking into a room, Mary Ellen's elixer would turn Agatha into skimmed milk. She needn't worry. Time was Mary Ellen's good fairy.

Long after eight o'clock now. She shivered under white linen, then saw him coming—blackness pass-

ing across yellow windows. His pale face peered for her, shadows around her were deepened under his eyes. He was spent—mis-spent, a better word. If she could put her arms under his, help him up the steps. All reason fell away, all the Koch and Bible stuff with it, into a void. Her heart held one wish: "If he doesn't get his experiment tonight, I can't bear it."

He hadn't known she was there until her dark hair came out against the door. Her dress frosted the dimness. Luminous . . . still . . . an other-planetness about her. Her hand turned the knob. He stepped out with her into insulation.

"There go those two loons into the shanty." Nora, looking through bars, saw the laboratory door shut on her laugh, which ran its coarse circuit.

Thirty pink and six red ones—the test tubes were there in the incubator just as he'd thought they would be. His formula had worked itself out in three hours! It had waited there all the time—so simple and beautiful any one could have seen it. Half his life veined with paths to it—one step after another till the cumulative commonplace made its finished pat-

tern. And he lifted his long miracle out of the incubator, set it down on the table.

"A little army—it will march, never fear, to China," she'd said, believing before he did, knowing before she saw, had lifted chores off him. "I'm charwoman to it," she'd laughed. And it was true—every morning she opened his windows. He hated the ape in him that had made him forget her for a moment. Turned now to see her, poised service—beside him—her eyes very deep pools in her face. If one dragged them, "Behold thy handmaiden"—the words lay there, plain as anything. This morning he had measured her by calendar time! "I have been with you all the way," her eyes said now, drawing him over the road she had gone with him. Further, further back, till he saw his idea, its tiny beginning, cradled in the curve of the handmaiden's arms, gently—an incipiency of sharing.

"It's as we hoped. You and I will make the little army march into China." He watched her eyes fill to the brim with his certainty. . . .

"You and I?" She was in his pattern for keeps. Their Idea, then, lay fecund in the thirty test tubes.

Incarnate, "You and I" would come out, march round the world, stalk over the earth, conquering . . . healing . . . a new kind of war. . . .

God is here—she knew it once and forever. Dr. Farraday brought him here with his pattern.

She in it too—safe with him in the God he traced in the little room.

Safe, so walls and roofs lifted. Free for a moment—she was at the source behind all patterns. Couldn't describe it or remember it afterwards except as a drink of ecstasy, felt it going, a wine of light, through her veins. . . .

But it couldn't last. . . . A Miss Mapes made up of infinite reveilles—a Miss Mapes that bored one to death, was calling her back to consciousness, bustling about competently to give her time—taking Dr. Farraday's temperature as though nothing had happened.

"It's 101°," she heard a usual tone say. And out of the big house came the saw of violins—nervous, scraping for pitch. The piano joined them—they stepped out together insinuatingly into the night.

The party was beginning. "If you don't go you'll

be late." She squeezed out the words through her teeth.

Outside, he saw the big house, a phosphorescent ant heap. Strange, that he supported this vast teeming thing. Didn't feel very solid—must he leave Miss Mapes, go away from her planet? If she said one word, just one, he wouldn't go.

"You must hurry." He might touch her hand—not go so aridly—how like a man. . . .

But Dr. Farraday didn't dare.

She watched his strong fingers sliding out through the door. . . .

CHAPTER XX

THE kitchen door was a yellow hole to him. Black coats swarmed in it. A drop light flashed out a pile of plates, Nora's back on the way to the pantry, a butterfly bow embossed on black satin. The smell of human beings and food bathed the Doctor in its hot strata.

In the front hall a man addressed him as, "Hat, sir." A huge bowl (presumably whiskey spoiled with sugar and fruit) nested in green on the dining-room table. Green everywhere! One flight up, his office was a forest primeval. Hidden under palm trees, Dr. Squires' room—a music box. In the parlor Agatha, against a bower holding his white roses, sparkled like a Christmas card. Beside her, Emmy's head, a little candle burning at the altar of Agatha.

A couple, pasted together, dipped across the floor. The party was beginning.

"There goes Father." Agatha nudged Mrs. Farraday.

Mother needn't say Father was late because he was tired. He'd been drinking with Miss Mapes.

Nora had seen "that woman" stealing "three bottles, Mother" quite openly out of the pantry. If the punch was weak, and the men all left to go over to the party at Sherry's, "you'll know whose fault it was." Pure weakness of Mother to let Miss Mapes stay in this house another minute.

"Who knows—we might be too late now." And Agatha bowed most respectfully to Mrs. Van Peyton.

"Your child is looking so like the dear Bishop, too," Mrs. Van Peyton complimented Emmy, but one did miss a girl's curtsey nowadays.

"Don't be sweet to people—be chic—act as if you didn't care." Hard to be chic for Emmy, who felt that to stand now, making a smile for Sammy Osborne, while Miss Mapes ran away with the whiskey, was being nailed to the floor.

Sammy said he had come to have the first dance with Mary Ellen.

"You must mean Agatha." Mrs. Farraday shoved him on with her voice.

"Mary Ellen's room is where you will dress," Emmy had told her husband. A Woolworth build-

ing, this house of Emmy's. Stairs, forever stairs . . . third floor . . . nursery . . . Mary Ellen's bed might be there— If one lay down a moment . . .

"Father, I am all dolled up."

His youngest daughter moved out of her room to him. Under the light, her dress billowed with shadows.

"Father, I'm so happy!" Her words were a gush of youth. They parted the clouds in his head.

She caught his look. It clung to her, let her go wistfully. After the party, wouldn't they have concerts and concerts, just!

Pleasant to feel Mary Ellen's arms around his neck before she silhouetted down and away in the haze of the stairs.

Inside Mary Ellen's room—cribs used to be there —one little iron bed now. Over the dressing table the lights played tricks with him . . . sailing their bubbles about in the air. The place was disheveled—or was it a fantasy?—the rubbers on the mantelpiece.

His mind a marsh, thick, stagnant, with weeds through which Miss Mapes shot up, white with vitality, holding something no one else had for

him—something he didn't have to earn. "Good service," Emmy would call it.

"Hurry," she had said a minute ago. He hadn't wanted to leave her.

"Have you ever seen Blake's Nebuchadnezzar?" she had asked. No, that was the first night. Tonight the saxophone was Nebuchadnezzar. Outside—Did she hear it?—jumping, brown feet on the earth, pounding and pounding—arms writhing above them and bodies shaking. "Come on, don't be afraid." It wheedled the animals to crawl out of the jungle. "*Soft*-ly—*soft*-ly—*come along*," it coaxed them. Now they were gliding into the brown bodies . . . in the brown bodies now, hyenas and leopards, a glare in brown faces.

He had seen a tiger in Dr. Squires's face this afternoon looking out at Miss Mapes; but Miss Mapes wouldn't let the animal get into her. She would be all right, even in China,—or something like that. "Never fear," she had said.

But of course he could see his clothes hanging queerly on the end of the bed, knew he had a touch of fever, and naturally it made him confused. Even putting on the damned coat for the third time, he

wasn't sure it was right; and the waistcoat buttons, "Come back, little wanderers," ran away from his fingers. Emmy, downstairs, would be calling him in a minute, was leaping at him in the music. "John! John!" Was it Nora now who knocked at the door to say, coming in, "Mrs. Farraday says Mrs. Van Peyton is downstairs"—could the doctor come soon?

"Presently, presently, Nora." Great roadability in him to talk smoothly, with a fever raging inside his head. Quite proud of the phrase, too, didn't know it would come out so easy. Wanted to pull out Nora's butterfly bow. Mary Ellen would do it if she were here—would wink deliciously, a little girl all over again.

But he was all aching sockets. Couldn't Nora see that Mrs. Van Peyton wasn't a woman to hurry a man with aching sockets? "Not an iota, not an iota." Pity for Nora to miss that nice word!

Outside the door were perilous stairs foriorn on which his feet fell heavily at an immense distance. The music was dying down, brown bodies in the jungle all asleep now under tropical leaves. Animals all satisfied, quiet under great green leaves.

He was going to Emmy through smoke that made

him sick. Growls from his library, light falsetto cries in their bedroom, a smell like a Persian garden. He saw fur sliding off a bare shoulder.

Downstairs safely now, could see Emmy—would get to her if he walked very carefully, was beside her now, could hear the spangles tinkling—icicles over her arm. Agatha's face looked at him solemnly over a rose bush.

("Of course you are beautiful, Agatha, you must know it without my telling you," she had just heard Sammy.)

"I want you to give me a roadster, Daddy," she called gayly to her father, feeling her power.

Wonderful thing, a début, Dr. Farraday thought. Emmy said, "Agatha must have one. It turns a child into a woman." All this music and these young men saying: "Pleased to meet you, sir—good evening, sir." Hadn't known there were so many young men in the world. Perhaps they came in, a stage mob, over and over—all these young men, and Mrs. Van Peyton over there bowing to him from the waist—waiters with white gloves—and would he like a glass of punch, sir? from Nora.—All these things were needed, to turn Agatha into a woman.

He hoped Mary Ellen wouldn't have a début right away. Agatha's party had already done enough to Mary Ellen. Wanted to pull her bronze hair as she danced by. Saw there was no hair to pull, it was gathered into her neck. An imploring look from Mary Ellen—"I love you," it said, "but leave me alone, I am pioneering. You are the hearth god; I will come to you later—just now let me by on my own."

Dr. Squires was passing, holding Mrs. Stuyvesant in a swoon dance—heads together.

Penny, against the mantelpiece, winked. "Dr. Squires making a fool of himself." Nails, hair, and slippers shone on Penny—Penny, Solomon, all in a glory!

"Doesn't he look beautiful?" Emmy withheld nothing from Penny, an empty gourd for Penny—who was smiling now. His spread hand plastered a yellow velvet Enid against him. But now the boy was changed in a moment, in—"A twinkling of an eye." Enid was whispering something that put a whipped dog into Penny.

No, she hadn't told Mother, but she would arrange to meet him Sunday or Monday. Couldn't he

think of her a little—just a very little? Enid asked him across her shoulder, dancing off with Sam Osborne.

In front of the Doctor, Madeleine Brazee's face floated, a gold ball in a fog. "You ought to be in bed, Doctor." "Agatha is vestal, positively vestal, tonight, Emmy." Emmy not so pleased as she ought to be, not so pleased—Penny, against the mantelpiece now, was following Enid with hungry eyes. In and out, no matter how she twisted, they stuck to her. . . .

"Madeleine Brazee puts Emmy Farraday in the readymade department—over there, see . . . with the Doctor?" Lola nudged Mrs. Bertie. "Ever see a Bishop in petticoats?" Then let her watch Agatha dancing away from her mother. If Mrs. Bertie would look carefully, she would see Agatha's gown (two hundred dollars cheap for it) was the family roast beef transmuted all right on her back.

Mrs. Bertie told Lola, "For God's sake, look at Janie Stuyvesant, in a chorus-girl dress, dancing with Dr. Squires." Lola was right, she agreed with her

thoroughly—Janie's expression was ground for divorce.

Only there wouldn't be one—Lola was sure Dr. Squires would never make a scandal. "Look at his cravat"—"and there's my Jinnie passing by." A crow's wing flew off Lola's face. "She's too slender." Lola wanted every one to hear that "too slender." Jinnie was divine, but a mother must remember nowadays that faint damns were the only praise to give to a daughter.

In Madeleine's ear, Mrs. Van Peyton's voice modulated, "I have always wanted to know you better." The woman must have moved up beside her, had heard of her dinner to the Crown Prince of Sweden—was fishing deeply now for an invitation.

"Won't you and Mr. Brazee come to dinner next week to meet a few friends?" The question sank, a nice little worm on a hook.

Of course they would come. Madeleine recognized "this old dame" for a social drill that newcomers had to go through. Part of the courting of New York to sit there and listen, wasn't it, to Mrs. Van Peyton? ("So few women, dear Mrs. Brazee, who

could go back to a Signer.")—wondering if Jim had got home, if he would come for her tonight, if Bennett would remember to say "Life and death" on the telephone. . . . Wondering, too, how the Signer would really feel if Mrs. Van Peyton went back to him; sure he wouldn't stay on those thin lips long if he could help himself—not for a moment while Mary Ellen with her glasses off danced by—glowing, gleaming, dewy, that girl! Her brace polished her smile. Emmy had better be quick about getting rid of Agatha; once that brace was off Mary Ellen, Agatha wouldn't have a chance.

"The creature isn't here." Lola had searched everywhere with her lorgnon.

"Hidden her away . . . jealous!" Mrs. Bertie had just time to whisper into the hush that fell as the Prince walked into the room.

Good God! he was bandy legged. Madeleine swore she would at least make Jim get straight legs for Enid! Mrs. Van Peyton assured her that she'd had the young man to lunch yesterday. "He had perfect manners, my dear. Said his Aunt Alexy was ailing. Too bad—that queenly woman!"

Dr. Squires's arm slid Janie into a seat beside Madeleine. "I'll have you meet the Prince at dinner at my house this week," her lifted face said to him.

Poor Mrs. Stuyvesant—using her social prestige for an aphrodisiac. These last affairs of women were Grand Guignol spectacles, made one shudder, made Madeleine Brazee look at her own corpse.

Dr. Farraday felt Emmy's touch on his arm, saw her mouth set in a bow of welcome, saw Agatha look at Emmy. In a book the look would be expressed, "A spark passed between the mother and daughter."

"Hush!" in Emmy's church voice.

"Prince Blavadsky"—the butler christened the hush.

A cold little head on a spindly body: "The honor is mine, sir." A distancing bow, what John Farraday saw coming towards him. Prince! Potted royalty! Funnier to the Doctor than anything he'd ever imagined—that a man could walk on the orchestra side of the footlights with the air of a stage prince! Wanted to share the joke, but the Prince had turned the ball into a prayer meeting—solemn as anything!

Nobody felt like laughing at it with him except the Prince.

But the Prince was the joke—he must see it! Why wouldn't he see it better than any one?

"Hello, Princeling," John was saying thickly, slapping the Prince on the back with the flat of his hand. *Whack!* The slap hit Emmy's heart, for John was laughing as though he had found the best joke in the world.

The Doctor had a great laugh like an air quake.

But why didn't Emmy laugh with him? her husband wanted to know—Emmy, whose eyes were wild things out of burrows. Agatha, too, his own daughter, was having a feast of cold hatred off him—picked his spine bare with her eyes. Why, she was his enemy—Agatha, his own daughter! Emmy, too, could have killed him because of this little man ending in "adsky." Trying to form the sound of the name, Dr. Farraday's lips went around it like a movie slow-up.

How could he drink tonight of all nights? Emmy had never seen him "that way" before. She didn't need Agatha now to say: "Miss Mapes"—how else

could John have got to the bottles? "You're hopelessly drunk, John." She didn't care whether the Prince heard her or not. He had better know that she stood with him and Agatha against Father, who was becoming useless.

Her poor Agatha—limp with the shame of it.

"You had better go upstairs, John." This time she tried to make the Prince hear.

It should have been Emmy, but it was the Prince (immaterial and irrelevant young man) who gave him his arm.

For the Prince had seen God in the Doctor's eyes. Hoped to see that great big man another time, would respectfully like to talk to him. Agatha saw him bowing low over Father's hand, kissing it.

"Look, Mother, he's kissing Father's hand in the hall. How he loves me, Mother! Isn't he a real Prince, Mother, worth thousands and thousands?" Emmy got her daughter's triumph across Blavadsky's shoulder. As the Prince said, "Will you do me the honor—"

Enlacing Miss Agatha's detestable body, "Make it possible, God," Blavadsky implored, "for me to get

away from this *sheep's* profile who will crop upon the oldest name in the world as upon clover."

"You dance divinely," Agatha murmured, guiding him forcibly right past Mrs. Brazee.

Who was that divinity he had seen near the stairs a moment ago—could Miss Agatha tell him? Once before he had seen her.

Deeply he knew he could see God with a girl like that in white linen. Hers the eyes that he sought. Better even than his Natushka's that were born despairing. Those eyes held a promise.

Agatha thought it was better to let the Prince know once and for all that he must have seen one of the servants, and she didn't care to hear him answer that in Russia they didn't use supernals up in the kitchen.

Madeleine Brazee, too, had seen Miss Mapes in the hall, a presaging whiteness about her like phlox before the storm.

"I must see if my husband has got home." Miss Mapes's face flashed the necessity to her. As Mrs. Van Peyton expressed it, "The Brazee woman seemed most uncontrolled," for she pushed between the

musicians—their chairs were serried against her. "Let me through, let me through—" "Let me pass, let me pass—" to the couples on the red carpet. She slid downstairs. Out of the front hall she fled across the street. "Look out, lady"—but she didn't see the motors. There was a light in Jim's room; perhaps he was home. As she rang her own bell—she had forgotten her coat—she fell against Bennett, who opened the door.

"Is Mr. Brazee at home?"

Bennett had to hold her up with his hands. "The Madam was all in."

"The Doctor is looking something awful. You'd better go up," Nora told Miss Mapes, who was passing by the kitchen.

So she got there just in time.

CHAPTER XXI

"LEAN on me." In the hall, her shoulder was a rock for him out of the mist, stayed under his hand as he walked on and on—up stairs that pulled out, an accordion unfolding, endlessly stretching into Mary Ellen's room.

Everything all right now. Miss Mapes was sitting on Mary Ellen's bed beside him. She must have taken his shoes off, pulled open his collar; cool softness on his face. Was sponging him, patting him dry with a towel . . . reachable safety.

Downstairs no safety—under his feet a shifting floor—riff-raff jamming against him—Emmy moving it on with "How de do, here's Agatha. . . ."

Miss Mapes sponging his mind now, sponging away shadows that hung from the eaves—bat's wings that reached down to the floor, the place thick with them, clearing up his mind thoroughly as she did everything else—house-cleaning dinginess, five years' accumulation! "A conscientious day's work," Emmy would call it.

He could see her clearly now . . . light all about

her . . . crystalline. It was *preposterous*. Small words were all put away for the party . . . wouldn't risk it again—but the way he hadn't seen her before was that word! With the shadows sponged away, so ridiculously apparent she was the woman he had loved always. "Ignorantly worshiped"—that was it! Very well expressed ages ago. Tramp, tramp, tramp. All his life footsteps toward her; she there all the time, dormant. She the footsteps, too—the whole thing! Ridiculous, but whether you believe it or not, ladies and gentlemen—with his gavel on the table—it is nevertheless true that nothing else in the whole world matters at all.

Clearly he was witnessing for the first time, as the Church would put it, the total emergence of the woman he loved. Perfectly his own—indigenous . . . inherent . . . and so simple and beautiful, sitting there. A child might have seen how impossible it was not to love Miss Mapes! Not to burst out with:

"I love you—I want you—nothing else matters."

And she hadn't known she was hungry, hydra-mouthed, for those words that ran up her like sap. Not an inch of her hadn't parched stupidly.

A dull woman—she—thinking herself a satisfied secretary. When frankly it began with "I'm Miss Mapes," spoken into the front door. Now his hands were pulling her down to him. Didn't he feel her arms round him, easier now, held closer and closer against her?—she wanted him more than anything else. Her harbor . . . shoreless, tossing, before . . . she could lie folded now, cocooned in her sails . . . in peace, her cheek on his at the ultimate rim of herself . . . moored. No billowing any more . . . she wanted to stay. No shilly-shallying—just wanted to stay.

Everything could go. Big house, little house, the Idea, too—she wouldn't care. Safe in a pattern? A kindergarten idea beside this.

She would tear every one's hands off her man . . . just himself left . . . and the woman he wanted.

While as tight as he could, he held on to her. If they separated—that was his fear! for the shadows were coming back in his head. If one of them so much as touched her—there was a terror! The others would overlap, wrap round her, draw her back again—he would lose her in shadowland! In shadowland . . . (nursery word for great hidings . . . like dolls

for babies, secretary for the woman you loved) she mustn't loosen her grip . . . "Hold tightly, keep your head close to mine on the pillow—no matter how dark it gets, don't go away." Only he couldn't say a word of it, could only see one thieving shadow stealing down—creeping a mist over her . . . deepening gently . . . craftily. So he clinched deep into the firm flesh of her arm: for people got lost in a fog! And now he couldn't see her at all—don't go away! Shadows in his breath, trying to smother him. If he could only make her understand—hold me tighter and tighter. Together . . . was the only way to get the best of them—and it was hard, gasping and choking, to say the words. . . .

"You and I" . . . They were out now . . . it was over . . . she knew now.

But she didn't know . . . wouldn't understand . . . unclasped her hands . . . was taking her cheek away . . . How could she? She didn't care then . . . he wouldn't have believed it of her. Felt for her, couldn't touch her any more through the blackness . . . lost . . . she had gone and left him alone then . . . lost . . . eternally lost. . . .

For those were miserable words for him to say

to her. And what possessed him to say them just now?

Why couldn't he leave that "You and I" discarded downstairs so far away now?—not wedge it between them, so she had to let him go on the pillow, had to look in spite of herself at the intricate weave he put right in front of her nose. So even plainer than downstairs she saw the Doctor's veins and hers now on the pattern—no telling where one began and the other ended—crisscrossing the design together, the closeness of the weave . . . closing in on her . . . no getting away from it . . . no arguing facts away . . . If she drew out the "You," the pattern would fray, and the "I" would bleed out, or vice-versa—no safety for one without the other . . . hopeless . . . utterly. . . .

My poor darling, my poor silly, with your "nothing else matters," didn't he see he'd already taken her for good, tied her up tight forever? (Excuse me while I laugh in my sleeve, the answer for him.) She was a protected woman — highly respectable — who couldn't get away, couldn't go to hell, if she parched for it. Marriage? Nothing! There were annulments

for marriage . . . divorce . . . No dissolution for "You and I." Once in that pattern, a woman couldn't move hand or foot. It clutched her.

Not to hold his head close to her, to close herself out, to keep him safe with the god he had made, gnawed her!

God is eating me. White teeth at her heart. I am the sacrament He wants for his pattern. "Oh, have a little mercy!" (For he wanted her body and blood.) So she must go away from the bed now . . . his dear head on the pillow . . .

"You and I," the words, over and over, were a pulse beating out in the room.

She must call Mrs. Farraday right away. For wasn't she, "Miss Mapes in the pattern business" now?—A connoisseur of patterns, safe for good! Hellish thought! Assigned to the part of pushing a greedy Miss Mapes, who hadn't cared, off its damnably inviolate outlines.

Dr. Squires was outside the door she opened—Janie Stuyvesant, a woman dangling against a curtain, had heard him say his chief was ill and he must run up and help him. What were the Doctor and

Miss Mapes doing alone at the top of the house? he wanted to know.

Hadn't known the white woman who opened the door could look like that—her face shining, who heard him diagnose, "Cold—nervous exhaustion," cupping Dr. Farraday's chest, as he thought how she loved that old man on the pillow! For a woman wouldn't stand inert like that, eyes grappling for an opinion, unless she had been everything to a man. "He's very ill." Wished he could say, "He's dead" —wanted to stick the words into her heart, see them spread out on her white linen dress. "Too much work in the laboratory, sick with senile foolishness"—for he could at least make her quiver.

What was she saying?

"He has his test . . . in the safe downstairs . . . is the greatest man in the world now."

Spoke beyond him in her hellish way. He might as well not have been there at all. Threw the news at him like a bowlder, could smash him without so much as noticing him—curse her!

His face disintegrated in front of her. So she saw down the last curve of envy stilled by fear in the man. She must go instantly—leave the Doctor so

safe that no Dr. Squires could hurt him—would have gone, only that Mrs. Farraday came into the room.

"Wait, Miss Mapes."

In an exorcising voice, Sammy Osborne thought, following behind the woman. Wondering just why Mrs. Farraday had stood at the head of the stairs, calling: "Come up at once, Sammy"—saying to Mary Ellen's yellow back, "Don't you dare to move."

But Mary Ellen—and Sammy knew she would—came right up to see what they were doing to Father.

And there was Father, his head and feet touching the bars of her bed. He was chanting "You and I," his head turning as if he couldn't rest anywhere.

"He's very ill, too much laboratory . . . if you're not very careful . . ." Dr. Squires was setting out all his little performances. "This pill every two hours . . . And of course you can get me— In case of unforeseen delay, if at any moment the patient might be sinking, Miss Mapes will put this needle into his arm." Mary Ellen watched the shiny needle, all filled, that he left in the cotton. Just to look at it made one shivery. Oh, how could Miss Mapes ever,

ever put a sharp thing into an arm? Miss Mapes, who wasn't looking at Dr. Squires at all, who stood at the foot of the bed, her hands folded as if she had nothing to do but wait—something in her face that made one feel safe for Father.

Sammy knew without looking it was Miss Mapes standing there. And what in hell did this Farraday woman want to bring him in for? What kind of a woman was she to put a boy in a hole? Not the Mrs. Farraday he had known—not Agatha's mother, or the hostess of Agatha's party. She was a pounce, and he wasn't quite sure that she wasn't going to land on Miss Mapes.

And Emmy Farraday did want to jump on Miss Mapes, was nothing but claws for "that woman," had been ever since she had seen "Look out for Miss Mapes and Father" all screwed up in Agatha's face as the darling danced by with her Prince downstairs. Hadn't she, John's wife, had to stand, receiving guest after guest, knowing that the woman was alone with an irresponsible John at the top of the house for a good half hour before Dr. Squires went round the banister and upstairs? "Deliver me from evil," she had prayed, as Papa had taught her

to, shaking hands everywhere, but there was no Papa in her.

Lola, sitting near the door, had seen Emmy Farraday pointing from her head to her feet. Some one had given her the scent of John and "the creature." Lola could see she had got it very strong, for she rushed from the place, bumping past a boy who was saying politely: "Your punch is great, Mrs. Farraday."

Out of the door, Emmy's new satin slippers hadn't gone upstairs fast enough. She had pushed past Sammy and Mary Ellen on the hall stairs. "Why, Mother"—Mary Ellen hadn't known what to make of Mother pushing so.

Her breath was all gone she had hurried so to get to John's door. She paused there a minute, as a waltz died downstairs in a chord.

"The greatest man in the world," Miss Mapes was saying inside the room as she, his wife, stood outside! That woman praising him to Dr. Squires—as though he were Miss Mapes's John to praise—made her heart beat in her ears. This stranger had made him sick, forcing him to stay late in his laboratory, had worn him out so he was lying now on Mary

Ellen's bed, unable to work for his wife and his children. Hadn't she, his wife, warned him against the late hours? But this woman had set herself against his family, hurting him, "my very own husband." Insolent woman! Agatha was right, insolent wasn't enough. She could feel the word "prostitute" lying just behind her lips, as she called: "Come up, Sammy," over the banisters. "And don't you dare move, Mary Ellen."

Father needed some one to take care of him, for Mother didn't even notice him, was crazy, screaming at Sammy: "Isn't this your Miss Mapes, Sam Osborne?" while Sammy looked at Miss Mapes in that nice way he had, although he did drink. No, she wasn't the Miss Mapes he had known. But Mother went on saying that she had Penny's word for it. "You told Penny Miss Mapes was your mistress in Paris." Sammy was blushing to the roots of his hair. "Penny was utterly mistaken," he said, and of course Penny was an idiot and could never be anything else. But if Penny was mistaken, why was Miss Mapes saying so gently: "Hello, Sammy!" as if she had known him for ages?

"Hello, Sammy!" For it was Sam Osborne. She had forgotten his name, but she knew him perfectly. Not so young as he had been in the Tuileries gardens, not nearly. White and vague to her then as the statues around them—in the night air that had the mixed smell of French flowers. Was clinging to her then . . . his last night in Paris, was afraid she would think him a terrible coward for being so scared—only eighteen. "It has got me." He hid his face in her coat sleeve. For he couldn't stand seeing blood, blood everywhere, all for nothing.

At the foot of the Doctor's bed: "Don't you remember me, Sammy?" For he must remember how she had taken him home. What else was there for that Miss Mapes in the Tuileries gardens to do, as she had seen him fumble for the address of some woman, "any woman"? Glad now—so glad—for Sammy brought the war back to her, formless and bleeding, endlessly bleeding, brought chaos, right across Mary Ellen's threshold into the room. But that was five years ago. "And now I must leave."

The Doctor's lean hand moved across the sheet.

"God was terribly hungry . . . found her bountiful . . . helped Himself freely . . . cutting terribly deep now . . ." As she moved to the door.

Getting her dues right before him—Leopold Squires, the man she had treated to her airs. Unmasked at last—she admitted everything, said, "Hello, Sammy," like an old rounder. Mrs. Farraday was screeching now: "Vile woman! Sam Osborne's mistress! Who knows what with my husband? Polluting my Agatha! Out of my house!" Was pasting labels all over the baggage, who didn't even listen, only held out a letter to Mrs. Farraday, asking her to take it and before she posted it to think it over, please! As if Mrs. Farraday weren't howling, "Prostitute!" now at her, taking the letter as if it were contagious, screaming out, "Don't touch me!" as she took it.

This then was the kind of woman who had slammed the door in his face, wanted to freeze him into marrying her. Marry her!—he would have a few words with this woman about slamming doors as she landed out on the pavement tonight.

Her face is an intaglio, translucent and clear.

(Sammy prided himself on his knowledge of art.) Why couldn't she choke the old hell-hound? He would like to do it for her! He must have been very young six years ago to let her go out of his life like a shadow.

Mary Ellen noticed the beads of perspiration on Sammy's forehead. Mother was terrible! But then, there was that "Hello, Sammy." It couldn't be possible right here in one's own home that Miss Mapes was bad! "Good-by, Mary Ellen," she said in a way that made Mary Ellen know Miss Mapes was good even though it turned the whole house upside down to make her so, holding Miss Mapes tight against her.

"Come away, Mary Ellen." Mother pulled her away, was telling Miss Mapes now to ask help from her God. She needed her God—He would give her strength to repent if she asked on her knees, Mother said.

The Bishop's a family trait; only Mary Ellen escapes it, Sammy thought. Watching Miss Mapes's dress slip out of the door, hearing Dr. Squires call back, like a sleuth after her: "If you'll excuse me a

moment . . . follow my directions . . . below if you want me."

Dr. Squires had to go down the stairs very fast to keep behind Miss Mapes; was pushing past couples who sat close together on red carpet; was wishing as he reached the office floor that Miss Agatha wouldn't look at him behind a hedge of green feathers, that Janie Stuyvesant's white arms wouldn't hang, expectant tentacles, waiting; went like the wind past Agatha, past Janie's arms, bumped waiters with trays—had to be quick to catch up with Miss Mapes in the hallway, where she went into a coat closet.

(For her coat and hat had been waiting there for her since morning in the same smell of rubber.)

And it was too good to be true, to see this woman, who had slammed the door at him, herself slammed out on the street. Five years' work here, and no reference to open any doors with, "the Doctor's woman" written all over her. She would have to look at him now, as he planted himself square in front of her, eh? Not much choice now who she would look at, eh?

But she didn't—this vile woman, this "who knows what with my husband," wouldn't look at him, would have walked through him if he hadn't jumped aside. He put his hand out, but he didn't dare hold her. The woman was so—so damned immune to him. To hell with her!

"Wait a minute, I'll help you," he called. But her hand was already on the door handle. Had to hurry, for she didn't even turn to take the bills he'd pulled out of his pocket. He stuffed them under her arm—she'd hold them there all right, she who needed them now, and be glad of them too.

But they fell on the floor.

Curse the woman for letting his good money, so crisp under his feet, fall in the vestibule. Her hand was against the iron railing now, not even a "Thank you." Curse "the *thing!*"—who didn't even concede him. And he could get her back this very moment if he offered to marry her. That was certain. Say the word "wife," she'd turn and concede him all right, wouldn't she? Eat out of his hand, then, eh? Not go through the iron door as she was going, now, her eyes on the street. He owned her all right,

didn't he, when he just had to say: "Will you marry me?" for her to turn back and stay? She'd look at him then, wouldn't she? He clutched her sleeve, for couldn't a man even touch a woman he was going to marry?

"Will you marry me?" he called out. "Goddamn you! Will you marry me, I say?" She belonged to him now—she'd look at him now. He'd pay her back, he'd beat the bare hide off her now that he'd got her!

He was following her, would have had tight hold of her, only that she closed the iron door in his face.

Closing the door quickly, gone for good now—while a terrible man screamed behind her, "Will you marry me?"

Five years ago Dr. Farraday had opened the door. Bulk against the hall light—that's all he was to her then. Five years ago she was coming—going now. Meeting was the veil of parting then? One came and went, but always that question: "Is any one taking care of him now?" And she would die if it weren't there. All she was taking away with her now was the pain of that question.

Did one have to make God every single minute all one's life? If she could sink—down deep—below the whole world—so deep nothing would be there except loneliness. But she was held through the bars by a hand on her arm.

If she wouldn't marry him, wouldn't she even answer him? How was she going to make any money? Dr. Squires wanted to know.

"Let me go." She didn't want to make any money. Would he never let her alone?

No, he wouldn't let her alone—he was screaming after her now. And what in hell did she want to make, if she didn't want to make money? He called the question down the street. Shrieked: "What do you want to make, anyway?" Goddamn her soul to hell. Wouldn't she even tell him that?

Well, I'll be damned, Dr. Squires thought afterwards. He had got well out of the affair; that woman was crazy—he had known it from the beginning. "Stark, staring crazy," he said to Janie Stuyvesant weeks afterward—wanting her so, even crazy, that he closed his sharp nails into the palms of his hands.

What would Mrs. Stuyvesant honestly think? Dr. Squires asked her—of a girl who had answered a man—himself, he admitted—in the craziest way? Hard to explain to Mrs. Stuyvesant that he had asked the girl—the girl he was telling her about—did she want to make any money? For he had wanted to give her some work. She didn't want to make any money, the girl had answered him back. And when he had said very kindly—because he had wanted to help her—what did she want to make, anyway? she had answered him with one word thrown back over her shoulder.

"What word?" Janie Stuyvesant was stilled with curiosity—except for breathing.

Well, it almost embarrassed him to say the word out boldly, as the girl had said it. Usually it had something around it.

"What word?" Janie wasn't breathing at all now.

Well, Dr. Squires told her, the girl had yelled her answer to his question, What did she want to make anyway?—He didn't like to say it, but the girl had yelled back—"GOD." Just like that, Dr. Squires said. Had thrown the plain word at him over her shoulder.

CHAPTER XXII

"INSOLENT woman!" Sam saw Mrs. Farraday smile as she trembled, saw her throw the letter with the special delivery stamp on the bed. There it lay, the last of Miss Mapes, a white patch on the tufted comforter. "No longer any hurry about that woman's messages," the gesture said. "Insolent!" The words dressed the old lady up in stage trappings. She was walking round the room, Lady Macbeth for dignity now. Then she changed, was wheedling him, fawning on him, drawing him in with: "We got rid of that girl just in time, she was killing my husband. But I needn't tell you anything about that creature —boys will be boys." He would come to see them soon, wouldn't he? Gathered the old dame didn't want to lose any boy who would come to see Agatha.

Where in hell was Penny? Leaving his father in this rubbish heap of a room, jazz leaking in under the door, no one but this woman with venom dripping from her to help that great man—out of his

head on the pillow there. Caught. That was the way men got trapped.

Would Mary Ellen care to have another dance?

But Mary Ellen wouldn't consider it. It was terrible for her to think she had been dancing while Father—the darlingest in the world, who smiled "secrets" across the breakfast table this morning . . . "Oh, no, Sammy!" She couldn't. She would stay in her room.

Out into smoke and lax giggles Sammy stepped. This house. Restful as a zoo. Downstairs and away he had to go from Mary Ellen in the doorway. Not the girl he had danced with. Under copper hair, all tangled by the heat of the dance, this girl's face was twisting and untwisting, to think that she had danced while Father . . .

Downstairs Agatha looked at him with unwinking eyes. "Not going, Sammy?" He would bet that girl could screech, "Insolent!"

"Insolent" . . . the white stillness of Miss Mapes . . . wordless stillness . . . she kept it intact. Mrs. Farraday couldn't disperse it. "Christ! How cheap

he had been!" He left a bad taste in his own mouth, he had been so damned cheap.

"Go right to bed, Mary Ellen."

It was terrible to go away, blowing her nose softly so as not to disturb Father!

Now Emmy was alone with her John, could take care of him herself. No trained nurse about him tonight. Couldn't bear the thought of any more white linen. She had done her duty. No more keeping John away from her, burning up the strength that he needed to keep a good city practice—the kind that counted for something.

So Miss Mapes thought she could take him, did she? Well, he would never get away from her now. She would take Miss Mapes's place.

"He's tired—he's very tired. If you're not very careful . . . One of these dissolved every hour . . ." Dr. Squires had said to that woman. "And if you need me, and by any chance couldn't get me . . ." There was his hypodermic all fixed, wrapped up in cotton. If she had to she would get Dr. Squires. She wasn't a woman who could stick

a needle into a man's arm. It took a Miss Mapes to enjoy it.

"I'm so tired."

Tired from too much laboratory—Dr. Squires said so. If he'd only stop moving his head. "Can't you stop moving your head, John?"

Couldn't he stop a moment while she slipped off her dress? Her pink corduroy wrapper under the alarm clock! How careless of Nora! She drew it around her. "Dear John." She patted him gently.

Downstairs Dr. Squires would tell Agatha. Every one would understand that she couldn't leave her John a minute. "He just wouldn't let me go," she would say to Madeleine tomorrow. "Held on to me." She had borne enough from Madeleine Brazee.

"I'm so tired!"

"Don't, John, dear, don't be tired."

He needed a little vacation with her at Palm Beach —rocking on a porch with sea air for a week. She would get summer clothes. . . .

The music was still going on. Almost twelve now. She would have a salad course, even if it did cost more, "next time," which would be Agatha's marry-

ing a Prince. Agatha in tulle and orange blossoms in St. Thomas's Chapel, the place banked with flowers. "I, Alexis, take thee, Agatha." "My daughter, the Princess." Enid could be maid of honor. They would be richer then. They would have to be, ten thousand a year would be a mere pittance for Agatha and Blavadsky after children began to come. Besides, the mother-in-law of the Prince would entertain—dresses from Paris. . . .

"I'm so tired, so tired."

In the next room, Mary Ellen dreamed of a spring steadily unwinding—then it stopped. She sat bolt upright. "But nothing can happen to my father." Only she couldn't lie down again, had to stay perfectly quiet, clutching her nightgown in the dark, listening:

"Drink this, dear."

John swallowed obediently, but his eyes didn't see.

"Take me to meadows and hills—you promised." His voice trusted her . . . Penny's voice in velvet and curls years ago. Then—"I'm so tired." But he whispered the words now.

She mustn't get frightened . . . a little delirious . . . hadn't she seen Penny and Agatha screaming all night, and then in the morning eating their breakfast?

"John!"

She called him. Why didn't he hear her? Why did his hand quiver from hers over the sheet? She mustn't lose her head, wouldn't be silly and call—not yet. People didn't die like that. She must keep perfectly calm.

"Meadows and hills." He must mean the country. Not Nantucket or sensible places for the summer, but the cold far-away places where one lived all the year round that he was always talking about when they first married. "You promised," he said. But she hadn't.

She wished he would get well, so she could tell him she hadn't. To show she was right she could tell him the dress she was wearing, dark blue with pink piping, and a skirt which swirled round her feet, when that first offer had come from the West. Hadn't she told him that she didn't mind being dull or settling down to a small salary? Didn't mind taking

her babies out to that cold, lonely place? She remembered saying very emphatically at the time, "If you decide to stay here, you must be sure you won't repent your decision, John, sure you won't repent giving the children the best of everything, as you promised."

"We'll stay here then, Emmy, for good." He had decided himself. She always left him perfectly free.

"You see it was always your decision, John." But she wished he would say, "Don't worry." He always did lift trouble off her with his firm hands.

Up and down they ran—the excuses scurrying, so easily, in narrow grooves worn deep for them, old footprints ready for the thoughts of today to step into—scuttling quickly from the face on the pillow. . . .

Mary Ellen still sat up in bed, Agatha's even breathing beside her now. One, two, three, four, the library clock was a silver hammer breaking the darkness.

The same moment Emmy woke into a chill morning to hear no music outside. The party over now

and not a word with Agatha. John lying quiet now—better. She drew the comforter over him, took up Miss Mapes's letter from the floor. Jealous pain stabbed her. "Insolent woman!" Never again would she see any letter of John's.

But this was absurd! All this fuss about a ridiculous letter that John had shown her himself at breakfast. "A house on the grounds, and ten thousand dollars!" She knew the offer by heart.

But here was an answer, clipped to a stamped envelope and Dr. Fowler's letter. "Please think it over before you post it," the creature had said. It couldn't be that John had accepted the offer? "Oh, no, dear Father in Heaven, not that!" He wouldn't allow John to be so foolish, so wicked as to put the whole family in a village in Michigan.

She couldn't unclasp John's answer, her hand trembled so. Close under the light on Mary Ellen's night table, she could hardly make out the first line.

"Dear Dr. Fowler: I can't tell you how grateful—" and wasn't John always foolishly grateful? "The thought of a house—meadows and hills . . ." There they were again, those everlasting meadows

and hills. . . ." A family urbanized. . . ." Dear John. That meant that he saw, as she did, the importance of Agatha. "It wouldn't be fair . . . affection . . . deep regrets. . . ."

"I thank Thee, Father in Heaven." For even if dear John spoke about the country thirstily, you see when he got a chance to go there he refused himself—took what he wanted most. . . . A pity he couldn't have everything . . . had to choose. For ever and ever. Amen . . . I would have been perfectly willing. . . .

She bent over him. Dull whites under his lids. (In Agatha's bed, Mary Ellen heard "John" called sharply.) But John wouldn't answer Emmy. She shook him. The answering John was sinking away from her, below awful pallor . . . wasn't asleep . . . wasn't even indifferent. He wasn't there any more!

"He's dying!"

Father was dying. The words let terrible blinding streaks into Mary Ellen. Mother's voice calling on the telephone: "I want Dr. Squires. He said he'd be in." Mother couldn't get him. She couldn't speak

clearly. All her words were running away from her in a panic. "He's dying!" Mother was saying it again, screaming silly words now into the telephone. In the hall now, crying out, leaving Father. . . . But there was that terrible thing Dr. Squires had left for Miss Mapes near the bed, to stick into Father. Why didn't Mother, why didn't Agatha . . . but some one must do it, Mary Ellen thought, as she called, "Mother!" jumping out of her bed.

Mary Ellen was in the hall now shaking Mother, who wouldn't move. "I can't come," she said. (No one could expect a wife—could ask her to look at that silence in the bed.) But some one must do it—some one—"Oh, Mother! Agatha!" It was she, then, she, who must put that thing into Father's arm! Miss Mapes must have stuck it in lots of people, there must have been a first time for Miss Mapes. "God, let me stick this thing into Father, and don't let me hurt him," she prayed and went into the room. "Oh, Father—" If she could go under the bed, anywhere but here beside him—unwrapping the cotton. "Above the elbow," Dr. Squires had explained. "Dear God, please don't let me hurt him."

One, two, three—it pierced! It was in . . . She pressed the top down. "Please, God, let me draw it out safely!" The air was full of needles. There were needles and needles going through Mary Ellen's head.

It seemed the longest most terrible time before Father's gray face tinged slowly against the pillow. Then his lids moved, as though the eyes underneath them felt their weight.

"He's coming back, Mother, he's coming back now!"

For Mother was pressed against the post of the bed as though the wind had blown her, left her there fluttering.

John, her husband, was coming back, wasn't going to leave them, then. For a moment, Emmy hadn't thought . . . She would never get over it—never!

Poor Mother, whimpering like a shuddering little dog, kneeling now, pressing herself against the bedclothes. Poor Mother.

For a moment, Emmy had seen life without John, falling all about her. "Oh, John!" It had been terrible—nothing under her feet. "Oh, John!" She

reached her hand to him. Something sharp edged into her skin. It was that old letter she had tucked in without thinking. She drew it out.

"Meadows and hills." He had said it thirstily.

Mary Ellen heard the words come whispering out of Mother's lips like a prayer, then: "Oh, thank God, John, not too late." Great big sobs were coming from Mother. Poor, dear Mother, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand—holding the letter, kissing it. Taking up one's own pencil with the bitten edge from the night table, flattening out the typewritten sheets, scrawling big letters now on the back of a letter to Father.

"Dear Dr. Fowler: My husband has been ill, but with the approval of us all, he will accept your kind offer. Excuse scrawl on the back of your letter. Will write later. Emily Farraday."

She would have posted the letter now except for her pink corduroy wrapper. In the morning the first thing, she would post it. Still in time. That was all she could think of now. Even Michigan was wonderful now. He should have meadows and hills. Penny

and Agatha—it was hard to say "Agatha"—would both have to stand it.

Mother looked different from any other mother Mary Ellen had ever seen. All at rest and young now. She hoped Mother would let her take care of Father.

Emmy couldn't say, "Go to bed"—not now, to Mary Ellen, whose head was like a red mop, just touching the gray head. Below her blue wrapper bare feet showed against the carpet, and there was the child's hand creeping under John's. Emmy saw lean brown fingers close feebly over it.

CHAPTER XXIII

"MOTHER, you must rest." Next morning at nine o'clock Agatha took possession.

"You belong to me, Father."

Positively flirting with John. Delicious Agatha, Emmy thought. So lovely, too, dressed as near a trained nurse as a girl could be in a Red Cross apron, a Tecla necklace around her open throat, saying, "Run right away, it's my turn now with Father."

Agatha had never been this way before. Her Father followed her slimness about, saw his wrapper folded, his encyclopedias put out of sight. She was tucking in his sheets now. He had misjudged her . . . ridiculously weak of him, he knew, but he wanted to cry. His hand didn't move easily. Agatha brushed the tears off with a cobweb handkerchief, telling him he would have to get up very soon, kissing him below the part of his hair. Why, Agatha loved him! Her pink ear was right there—so receptive. "I'll give you that roadster." He couldn't help dropping it in. Nice girl, Agatha.

"Dr. Squires will be here soon." Dear Father must

sleep now. His daughter was going to pull down his shades. (She wanted to go to her mother.)

He lay on the bed. A new mystery to ponder on. This mystery of a daughter, who said, "You must get well for your family," going out of the door.

He was not so clever as Mary Ellen, who knew Agatha. At eight o'clock her elder sister squinted out from the pillow, asking, "How's Father? Better?" Then Mary Ellen needn't go into his room any more. Agatha would take charge of him herself.

Mary Ellen watched her yawning herself into her clothes in the gray morning light.

"Guess Blavadsky's ransom is your alarm clock, all right. Go right in and be your sweetest to Father."

Agatha could have slapped her, but her young sister always gave her that feeling.

Floating on a surface of weakness. Slowly, last night came back to the Doctor. It wasn't a dream then—her soft whiteness bending—here on his bed. Not a dream that he had held her . . . He wanted her now. . . .

Comforting for Emmy to leave John in Agatha's charge, after a hot bath to let one's self go, relaxing deep into the pink sofa pillows to read the papers.

MISS AGATHA FARRADAY MAKES BOW
INTRODUCED TO SOCIETY AT BRILLIANT DANCE

No one could miss it. No matter where one looked, Agatha's début jumped out of the paper. Madeleine Brazee had probably read it already. They had put the Prince in—his name spelled just the right way: "Adsky." The queer letters all in order. But Agatha's dress—"sequins" they said. And she had told the reporter over and over about the hand-put-on brilliants. Here she was, receiving: "Mrs. Farraday, the hostess, in purple velvet with sable trimmings." How too delicious! When she had worn last year's gray dress. But purple velvet and sables sounded better than gray satin, even if they had put in the spangles.

Purple and sable. She might get a dress something like that for the royal dinner in the spring—only she wouldn't be there. Of course she wouldn't. She would be in Michigan. It was confusing, too, about

John; at one moment a handsome doctor beside her going into Madeleine's great dining-room, saying, "Prince, this is my wife," and at another moment, the man on the pillow she had left upstairs with sad eyes, mooning away about meadows and hills. . . .

She felt so secure in her pink room, so settled for life on this pink sofa, a part too of the steam heat crackling up in the radiator, even of the gray asphalt yards that lay behind the curtains. All of them were herself.

Not so that house in the village in Michigan, which floated, a vague cloud in the back of her head —unknown and risky! Why, she hadn't even examined the plumbing! Overwrought last night—hasty, a wife in a panic, weeping there by John's bed. Glad Mary Ellen and not Agatha had seen her there.

And all the time she was reading the papers there was that horrid letter under the pillow. No matter how she hid it its edges were in her. "You will have to make up your mind. You will have to post one letter or the other," it said. "You will have to. . . ."

"Hello, Mom."

Agatha was in the doorway—poor tired child, taking care of her father!

"I'm to have the roadster. Father's fine. No need to get so excited last night. I'll have a Stutz."

"Thoroughly urbanized," John had written, and he was right; nothing rural about Agatha, stepping into the room. She would look very well in a roadster.

"You must get a red coat and hat, darling."

A green car, framing a girl in a red coat and hat, her hand on the wheel, was a picture as plain as could be. Solid and reassuring, it stood out against the mists of a village in Michigan.

Dear, dear John! But it would cost two thousand dollars at least—the kind that Agatha would want, would cost that. "A roadster!" Mary Ellen would have heard the word like a strong tonic chord, putting Mother back into her familiar key.

For had any one ever heard of a poor professor in Michigan spending that for his daughter? John was out of his mind last night. She had taken him too seriously. This morning's Stutz said as plain as anything that he wanted to stay. Just to think—

if it hadn't been for her pink corduroy wrapper last night—she might have thwarted his wishes. Had never imagined that old wrapper would save her from anything.

(Perfect nails, those nails of Agatha's, holding the paper. Long and polished, not one broken. "On hands that weren't made to tussle, but to manipulate things," John had said once, and they were very refined hands.)

"How about Miss Mapes?" the child was asking now, her perfect hands putting the paper down.

For Dr. Squires had told her that the creature was dismissed for good and all; but of course he was so much of a gentleman. "I can't give away any woman," all he would say.

Did Mother give Miss Mapes all that was coming to her? That's what Agatha wanted to know very badly. If *she* had been there, there wouldn't have been any doubt about Miss Mapes getting it.

"Of course the woman got it—got all that was coming to her." Hadn't Emmy brought Sammy into the room so he could hear Miss Mapes getting it?

Had Sammy told? Agatha hoped he had told.

"Of course not! He didn't need to," Emmy said, for the creature had made a slip, had said, "Hello, Sammy!" And after that it was all up with her.

She had called Miss Mapes "a vile woman," "an insolent woman!" And that dreadful name that Agatha used, beginning with "p." But after that "Hello, Sammy" of Miss Mapes's there wasn't a thing the woman could say. "She hadn't the courage to answer me," Emmy said. "She could only get out as quickly as possible."

"Was she crushed, absolutely crushed, in front of Dr. Squires?" That's what Agatha would like her mother to tell her, "Every little detail, Mother."

Of course, Miss Mapes was crushed. So crushed there weren't any details. "And what else could a woman be who had to walk out of a respectable home without a character?"

"But didn't she say anything—not one thing, Mother?"

"Why, no." Emmy couldn't remember that Miss Mapes had said anything. "Only handed me a letter. . . ."

"What letter, Mother?"

"Here, take it yourself. Decide for your father." Emmy tossed the letter to Agatha.

Oh, the relief of that toss to Agatha! The joy of that letter laid on the strong current of Agatha! Nothing to do but to wait and watch it swirl. Why think at all when Agatha was about? She thought for one. Wonderful Agatha, who never had any doubts!

"Stanchfield, Michigan," Agatha read aloud. "Discoveries? Well, we've settled, haven't we, that Father's too old to be making discoveries, Mother? Ten thousand a year! House on the grounds?" The joke didn't touch her at all. "Michigan will never get Agatha Farraday." The darling smiled, showing her beautiful teeth, closed and white.

Father's answer was all right—nothing to worry about. What was Mother crying for, anyway?

The child didn't see it was one's own answer one was tortured about. Made one ashamed, for she hadn't even noticed the pencil scrawl.

"Agatha!" But Emmy's cry didn't stop her. She saw Agatha tear up the penciled note on the back of Dr. Fowler's letter, as if it were trash. "Meadows

and hills!" Agatha ripped them to pieces. She was folding John's answer into the envelope now—licking the flap down.

Was she going to post it right away? "Wait just a minute," Emmy heard herself say. Ridiculous that she didn't want the letter to leave her, didn't know what came over her, said so to Agatha. In a queer way, it was as though she was sending her youth and John's out of the door, she told her.

But Agatha wouldn't give her one inch, not an inch. The child was beautiful—quite like Portia, as she asked, "Why did Miss Mapes hand you that letter, Mother?" And one had to admit that one couldn't imagine, unless it was pure insolence.

"Insolent woman!" Agatha must remember how much that word had to do with the shaming of Miss Mapes.

But hadn't Mother seen what was spread out for her to see? "You didn't know she was plotting a revenge on you, Mother?"

"Why, no." Emmy had thought of the woman as dangerous, but not exactly as "plotting re-

venge," couldn't quite see what Agatha meant by "revenge" until she spoke out more plainly.

"You wanted to get rid of Miss Mapes, who wanted Father for herself, not to speak of the Prince, and Penny and Dr. Squires. So she tried to punish you by sending us all off to Michigan, tried to just work on your emotions, dear, foolish little Mother, who would never see anything alone! Revenge, fifty-fifty, Mother, dear!"

"Punish you . . . send us to Michigan . . . revenge fifty-fifty . . . Against your Father too, who clearly wants to stay. . . ."

Clever Agatha, to make it so plain! Emmy couldn't be grateful enough to her, felt a child before her cleverness.

"Run and post the letter, Agatha. Run quickly, so Miss Mapes won't hurt Father." And Emmy saw her run so quickly that she almost bumped into Penny coming through the door in his striped pyjamas, for Penny wore the loveliest blue and pink pyjamas.

Penny wasn't quite awake. He looked like little-

boy-Penny who, John used to say, was stung all over with sleep.

He *was* half asleep, and the half of him that wasn't asleep was terror. For he had seen—Mother could never guess. . . .

"What had he seen?" Emmy asked.

"Oh, Mother—" He couldn't go on for a moment, for Mother didn't know how he felt about Enid, didn't know that Enid was his wife now. Only Agatha knew it, and Enid. In the midst of his terror, he remembered how well Enid knew it. "You're my wife; if you don't come with me I'll say it aloud," he had threatened her at the party last night as soon as Mrs. Brazee had scooted across the street. And Enid had come all right! Had come like a lamb! And she knew as well as he that Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Pennington Farraday was written in black on the register at the Plaza Hotel. She couldn't get away from him now—never, never! There was that honeymoon in black ink for her. Mother didn't know that it was Enid, his wife, who was there in the house opposite.

"Enid is over there, Mother. Think of it!"

"But what's the matter, Penny? What is it? What? Who? And why shouldn't Enid be there?"

So Penny said it was Enid's father that he had seen.

"But what about Enid's father?" his mother asked.

He couldn't get the words out, was afraid, just couldn't speak.

"You don't mean he is dead, Penny?"

Mr. Brazee dead! Emmy couldn't grasp it.

But he was dead! For Penny was saying to her that he had seen him carried in on a stretcher. Penny couldn't stand the thought that Enid was with him now—or did they say "it, Mother?" He couldn't stand the thought. "She must be so frightened," he sobbed out.

Enid across the street as Penny said, without Penny, whom she loved. No wonder her boy was crying for Enid (and Emmy couldn't help thinking: Enid—an heiress!). "Why, it might happen to any one," Penny said, as he went straight into her arms.

"Oh, Agatha!" For she was coming in now with her coat and hat on. (They must have been taking

him into his house, as she posted the letter.) Was there a crowd? Had she seen anything?

Agatha didn't answer, but she must have seen, for her blue eyes were staring out of her head. There was an extra in her hand. She breathed as if she had been running.

"They were crying it in the streets. They only found it out this morning. Look, Penny!"

So Penny looked with one at the headlines. Penny and his mother read the news together:

"JIM BRAZEE COMMITS SUICIDE IN OFFICE. BODY FOUND THIS MORNING. WIPED OUT. COMPLETE FAILURE IN WALL STREET. NOTHING LEFT OF IMMENSE FORTUNE. Not One Cent Left for the Widow," was written further down.

Nothing left for Madeleine Brazee of that immense fortune? Not one cent? Not even carfare? It was terrible. Emmy couldn't take it in! And there was Penny engaged to Enid! Of course, not now—Penny couldn't be expected to take care of Enid now. It wouldn't be fair to Enid—it was a trouble across the street now. Not theirs to bear, since

Penny couldn't marry Enid. They had enough to bother about without other people's trouble. It was terrible—made one cold all over—"Feel my hands, Penny"—but they must pity those poor people now. Penny must understand that he would have to just pity Enid.

But what was the matter with Penny and Agatha, glaring at each other like two angry children?

"You fool! You fool!" Agatha was saying. "I could kill you! Don't you see you've dished me completely?"

Penny had dished Agatha? "But how? When?" After all a girl might explain to her mother. And why didn't Penny explain, instead of hiding his head in one's breast as if he wanted to be safe from his sister?

But Penny was saying something now, snuggling close. "I'm married, Mother! Married to Enid!" One could hardly hear him, his head was so buried.

"Married, my Penny? Oh, God! My poor son, Penny!"

But she had thought it was an engagement. She couldn't ask, hadn't time to understand what was

going on. Agatha wouldn't let him speak. She tore Penny out of his mother's neck.

"Leave your brother alone, Agatha!"

Agatha was beside herself. And one couldn't bear it for Agatha—Agatha, who should have been a Princess; and one couldn't bear it for Penny—Penny, married to Enid without a cent. But what was Agatha saying?

"We won't have Enid over here. Not Enid, nor her brat, either." Penny looked winded and knocked out by Agatha's words.

"I'll bring her over here if I want to," Penny said. But he wasn't himself at all. "Brat!" He was snarling the word back at Agatha.

"Wasn't it all your own damned scheming fault?"

"Don't, Penny, don't," Emmy said, imploring him not to say those things to Agatha. "But, Lord, have mercy and deliver us from evil!" It couldn't be that Penny was going to strike his sister?

"My Penny striking my Agatha!" And he would have, for his hand was a mace over her head. He would have if Emmy hadn't screamed, "Stop! Stop! It's Mary Ellen."

For Mary Ellen was coming into the room now, was holding her blue wrapper together over her nightgown.

"Father is calling for Miss Mapes. There is something special he wants her to do for the experiment." What should she say to him, Mother? Mary Ellen wanted to know right away, for Father had called: "I want her at once." Mary Ellen was almost crying. It was all she could do to keep Father in bed.

"Well, he must wait—just wait. Do you hear, Mary Ellen? Tell him to wait, and that's all."

Didn't Mary Ellen see how impossible it was for Mother to go upstairs? She couldn't be running every minute, now that Miss Mapes had gone. Now that they had got rid of that woman, wasn't there to be any peace in the house?

"Just tell Father to wait—to wait! And don't you come down again. Do you hear, Mary Ellen!"

But she summoned Mary Ellen back for a moment, told her she must remember one thing very particularly; she was to tell Nora to ask Dr. Squires to stay to luncheon and dinner because of Father.

She was on no account to forget that it was because of Father he was being asked.

"Well, anyway, Blavadsky is out," Mary Ellen thought, as she went upstairs with her message. But Agatha called to her that she wasn't to bother about any message.

"I'll take care of Dr. Squires myself," Agatha said, looking at her mother across Penny's head.

THE END